











## **SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**





To  
FRANK MILTON  
MY COMPANION IN MANY OF  
THESE ADVENTURES

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## PREFACE

*Special Correspondent* is not an autobiography. Still less is it a history of the last three tremendous years. I have neither the ability nor the knowledge for that.

All that it aims at being is a personal record of some of the more exciting events of which I have been fortunate enough to be a spectator, whether as a journalist or a politician. Many of my judgments will, no doubt, be falsified by events, and some of my estimates of political situations may prove inaccurate when the real history of them comes to be written. What I have tried to do is to convert my experiences and impressions into a cinema reel of contemporary events.

Though I have made a conscious effort to keep in due proportion my political ideals and prejudices, it is inevitable that this book should have a Liberal bias. I believe in the old-fashioned nineteenth-century creed of peace and freedom, though I recognise that it is not the exclusive possession of any one party in the State. If this book can be credited with anything so pompous as a purpose, it is to try and show how dangerously these ideals are challenged to-day, and how disastrous it is to human happiness when the challenge is successful.

I am grateful to Mr. Roger Fulford for reading the proofs and much wise advice ; to Mr. Hercules Ross for his invaluable help, not least in deciphering my handwriting ; and to *Pearson's Magazine* for permission to incorporate some material about Denmark.

The Rectory,  
Finchley.  
March 1934.

R. H. B.





## CHAPTER I

### THE "COME-BACK" THAT DID NOT COME OFF

FROM 1926—when I got my first job, on coming down from Oxford, as a leader-writer on the *Daily News*—to May 1929 my whole life was wrapped up in the attempted "come-back" of the Liberal Party.

It is easy for opponents to ridicule that gigantic effort of the Liberal Party to redress its fortunes—its circus of land-van speakers, its "cash-box candidates," its ridiculous squabbles, its lost deposits. In actual fact, no cause since the war has attracted a fuller measure of devotion than the struggle for a Liberal revival. For Mr. Lloyd George it was his one consuming purpose. During the political season he would seldom spend a Saturday off the political platform. He could not have followed the ebb and flow of a battle in the war with greater intentness than he did the progress of the current by-election. I remember one week-end I was with him at Churt which coincided with the declaration of a comparatively unimportant by-election at Southend. The Liberal, though badly beaten by Lady Iveagh, increased his vote by a thousand over the last election, and I was wakened at half-past seven on Sunday morning by a message from Mr. Lloyd George with this joyful piece of news.

Then there was the re-emergence of Sir Herbert Samuel. As High Commissioner of Palestine and Chairman of the Coal Commission he had all the prestige accorded by the great Conservative Press to a Liberal who is no longer dangerous. Few posts, whether of dignity or importance, fell vacant for which he was not tipped. He threw it all away for the thankless task, in 1927, of the chairmanship of the Liberal organisation. For two solid years he carried the Liberal message to every corner of England. It is easy

to make speeches to roaring meetings, at an election, or on the wave of some great popular passion, but to begin campaigning in cold blood for a party that had been hopelessly out of office for nearly fifteen years, and was without organisation, candidates, or enthusiasm, and with a trail of spectacular desertions, required a measure of courage and self-sacrifice never adequately appreciated.

Then there was the old guard, who, with every temptation to do otherwise, remained faithful to Liberalism—the young men of the last generation : Francis Acland, Walter Runciman, Charles Masterman, Walter Rea, W. M. R. Pringle, and a dozen more. They all held minor posts in the triumphant days of Liberalism before the war, when for eight momentous years the party commanded a majority in the lobbies and overwhelming support in the country. In 1914 they were marked out for high office. Then came the cataclysm, followed by their own political extinction in the disastrous coupon election of 1918.

Perhaps the most pathetic case was that of Charles Masterman, a great Liberal, a burning social reformer, and, with all his faults, one of the men I am most glad to have known. As Financial Secretary to the Treasury he had done all the donkey-work of the 1911 Insurance Act. In 1914 he was elevated to the Cabinet. In those days a by-election was necessary. The tide was running hard against the Liberal Government. He fought Bethnal Green, and lost ; a month later he tried again at Ipswich without success. Then the war came, and, though he tried repeatedly, it was not till 1923 that he secured election at Rusholme. Then it was only for ten months, for Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, rather than submit to an enquiry into the Campbell prosecution, destroyed the first Labour Government in October 1924.

A few months after this, as President of the Oxford Union I invited Masterman to put the Liberal case against Socialism in a debate with Mr. Lansbury. It was a sad performance. The cloud had descended. He was occasionally incoherent. At times there were brilliant flashes of the old Masterman that in pre-war days had delighted a thousand Radical

platforms—but they were gleams that only emphasised the gathering darkness. After it was over and Lansbury had gained a great victory with one of his charming old-man’s appeal-to-youth speeches, I stupidly stammered out some perfunctory congratulations to Charles Masterman on his speech. I shall not easily forget his answer. “How old are you?” he asked. “Twenty-two,” I replied. There was a moment of silence, and then he said, “Oh, to be twenty-two again! Nobody is a failure at twenty-two”—the saddest and bitterest remark I have ever heard from age to youth.

It told me something of what that generation of young pre-war Liberal politicians had lost. Not that they were not lucky to be alive. Liberalism suffered terrible losses from the casualty-lists. Raymond Asquith, Neil Primrose, W. G. C. Gladstone—the position of the Liberal Party, and with it the future of parliamentary government, might be very different to-day if they had survived the carnage.

1926–1929 was a glorious gathering of the remnant. Constituencies where a Liberal candidate had not fought since the first election of 1910 somehow raked together an association to adopt a candidate; men who had been out of politics for fifteen years came back into the fray. There was even an attempt to patch up some kind of unity. I recall a luncheon given to the Liberal candidates at which Mr. Runciman spoke at the same table as Mr. Lloyd George, though, if I remember rightly, Mrs. Runciman only came in when the actual luncheon was over.

For us youngsters lately down from Oxford it was pure jam. Any recruit, and particularly a young recruit, was given a great welcome. We were royally entertained by the leaders, given constituencies where at least there was a prospect of victory, and liberally helped with our election expenses.

What was more, we did passionately believe in our cause. I thought then—and, indeed, think still—that a political system that provides no alternative between constitutionalism and catastrophe is itself a disaster.

It was two years of agony and exaltation and then

agony. There was the time in March 1927 when the party seemed doomed to swift extinction. Captain Wedgwood Benn, a Liberal if ever there was one, joined the Labour Party and resigned his seat. There was thus a by-election at Leith, which, except for a brief interval in 1914, had been Liberal since the Reform Bill. So low were the fortunes of the party that it was impossible to find a candidate who would consider it. It was offered to thirteen different persons. Then, one morning, Mr. Ernest Brown looked in at Liberal headquarters, and a distracted and dispirited Colonel Tweed<sup>1</sup> offered him the chance of fighting it. It seemed a forlorn hope—an Englishman fighting a Scottish seat at the nadir of his party's fortunes. As Tweed said to me, "Leith is a lost deposit, anyway." Brown went up, and, in the most brilliant ten days' electioneering since Philip Snowden's first campaign in Blackburn, beat the Socialists from street-corner to street-corner by the sheer fire and exuberance of his oratory, and finally held the seat in a three-cornered fight by 111 votes. For a few weeks after that it seemed that the boat was well under weigh. A seat was won from the Socialists in Southwark, and another from the Conservatives in Market Bosworth. But dissensions broke out again, and fresh paralysis attacked the party. Then old Lord Ashton, a Liberal peer and the linoleum king of Lancaster, was most foolishly induced by the Conservatives to intervene on behalf of Mr. Ramsbotham, the Conservative candidate, with a blistering attack on Mr. Lloyd George. As so often in a tirade of that kind, it tried to prove too much. It was Mr. Lloyd George's chance. Down he came to answer it.

I can see him now in the surging Territorial Hall at Lancaster, striding on to the platform with a pile of Hansards in his hand. He then set about refuting the charges line by line, finishing up with that deadly quotation from *Julius Cæsar* where Cæsar's wife suggests that he should send a note to the senate house that he was too ill to come. "Shall Cæsar send a lie?" "Will Lancaster," said Mr. Lloyd

<sup>1</sup> Then the chief political organiser of the Liberal Party.

George in tones of thunder, “send a lie to the House of Commons?” Lancaster decided that it would not, by a substantial majority, and “Parkie,”<sup>1</sup> the kindest and gentlest man that ever faced the hustings, was returned to Parliament in the most exciting by-election since the war.

Lancaster was followed by triumphs at Middlesbrough and St. Ives. Then once more the party entered the doldrums. So it went on all those three years—a series of victories and then a long line of miserable defeats. The situation seemed at its worst when Mr. Lloyd George announced that “we can conquer unemployment,” and gave plans and figures as to how he could do it. What a period piece those speeches seem now! There were only a million unemployed then. It was, in fact, a boom year. But politicians were far more disturbed than they are now, when there are over two million unemployed.

The programme galvanised the party into active life once again. The Liberals won Eddisbury, held by the Conservatives since 1906, and gained another sensational victory at Boston, jumping from third to first place. I remember the news reaching the National Liberal Club. Candidates for hopeless industrial seats clasped hands and said that they would meet in the House of Commons in a few week’s time—and Sir Herbert Samuel, cautious even in the hour of elation, said that he would like to verify the figures before he made any comment.

Then came the election three weeks later, on May 30th, and with it the destruction of our hopes. Despite all that energy and self-sacrifice and outpouring of money, out of 615 seats only 59 had returned Liberals. It was true that we had polled a quarter of the electorate, but what did that matter if we only had one-eleventh of the seats? No juggling with figures could disguise the fact that it was a terrible disaster.

I went over to see Mr. Lloyd George the following Sunday. There were newspapers strewn all over his library—all with such headings as “What will Lloyd George do now?”

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Parkinson Tomlinson.

There were platoons of political correspondents in his garden, fighting for his lightest word. Mr. Lloyd George was in his element. There was not a trace of disappointment in his voice or manner. The Liberals were in the dominant position. They would use it to extract electoral reform. They were a splendid fighting team.

Two days later one of these splendid fighters delivered over his sword to the enemy. Sir William Jowitt, having been elected for Preston as a Liberal on the Friday, had become Attorney-General in the Labour Government on the following Monday. He went down to explain himself to Mr. Lloyd George at Churt. "I hope," he said, "in the Labour Government I shall be able to work for electoral justice for the Liberals." It was a crushing blow, but L. G. maintained his courage to the end. "Well, Jowitt," he replied, "if everybody behaved as you have done, there would be no Liberal Party to get electoral justice for. I am very sorry that you have done this. You will stay to dinner, of course?" And he did.

They talked about the Derby that had been run a week before.

A week later the unemployment figures began to rise. It was the shadow of the crisis. For better or for worse, England was to meet it with Liberalism, its once trusted servant, in ignominious impotence. The great struggle of the late 'twenties for the resurrection of Liberalism was over.

## CHAPTER II

### ELECTION TORTURES

**I** SHALL NOT EASILY FORGET the aftermath of the election. I was fighting the Rugby division of Warwickshire against Captain David Margesson, now Chief Government Whip. He is a trenchant speaker and a hard hitter, and the election took on something of the ferocity of pre-war days.

We both said things about one another that no doubt we regret now. On the Monday before the poll a mass meeting, addressed by Mr. Neville Chamberlain on behalf of David Margesson, was broken up by my supporters and the Socialists. My friends alleged that the uproar was due to the fact that Margesson was making a personal attack on me. I dare say that he had every reason to do so. In the course of the campaign, I had complained that he did not speak in the House of Commons. I realise now that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for Government Whips to speak. He had countered with the suggestion that I stayed with Mr. Lloyd George in order to extract further finances for my election campaign. Neither charge was particularly edifying, and both were unfair.

But the launching of the broadside at me in the Rugby mart was obviously jam for me. My supporters the next morning crowded round to ask what reply I intended to make at my big meeting in Rugby the next night. I had already framed my opening sentence : " You are all wondering what I am going to reply to what was said about me last night by my opponent. I prefer to make no answer. The issues at this election are far too important to turn it into a slanging match between Captain Margesson and myself." The tide was running hard in my favour, and this display of electioneering magnanimity might just have put me in.

But it was never made. For our Labour opponent—a local tobacconist with no hope of victory, who had come forward

with great public spirit, against his doctor's orders, to champion a forlorn hope—died suddenly that night. The election was stopped, and Captain Margesson and I met next standing side by side at a memorial service in Rugby School Chapel.

A week later we entered the lists again. But the whole scene had changed. I shall never forget going out of Rugby station, on my journey back from London to resume my campaign, and seeing my own posters mocking me on the hoardings—"We Can Conquer Unemployment"; "Vote for Bernays." And there were 59 Liberal members out of 615 to do it with.

I do not think that in modern electoral history a candidate with, in ordinary circumstances, good chances of success has ever been put suddenly in a more hopeless position. I did not even know which party, if elected, I should be expected to vote into office. Conservatives and Labour were in a minority. Neither could govern without the help of the Liberals. Which Government did I favour? It was a reasonable question to which every elector was entitled to an answer. I could not give it. My leaders had not made up their minds.

In consequence none of them could come and speak for me. My opponents had half a dozen great figures on their platforms every night. On my own was myself and my sister, and a few faithful friends who, with extraordinary kindness, came to my rescue.

Labour, from being a neglected minority, immediately made the running. Jowitt joined them a few days later, and next day there was a poster, "Liberals—Follow Jowitt into the Labour Party." Labour headquarters sent down the strongest candidate they could find, Mr. John Morgan—a first-class platform speaker and a charming personality—and an array of platform talent that was positively devastating. Some of the names make strange reading now—Sir Oswald Mosley and Mr. J. H. Thomas and Malcolm MacDonald.

"What is that poor young Liberal candidate saying?" asked Lord Hailsham, when he came to address Conservative meetings. "Is he making any speeches at all?"



It was an impossible position. The whole Liberal army was in retreat, not to say rout, and here I was, left behind in the same entrenchments as when the battle began six weeks before. The end came mercifully soon, and David Margesson was elected. The figures were :

Margesson	.	.	.	.	15,147
Morgan	.	.	.	.	11,588
Bernays	.	.	.	.	10,158

Where the ten thousand votes came from remains to me to this day a mystery, and a source of gratification.

There is a popular belief that Mr. Lloyd George's friendship extends to young men only as long as they are of use to him. I have found the exact opposite to be the case. The first telegram I received on my return from the balcony of the town hall to my committee-rooms was one from Mr. Lloyd George inviting my sister and me for the week-end. I was tired out by a gruelling campaign which had lasted twice as long as that of anybody else, and was absurdly cast down by the result. I was tortured by the thought that had the election not been postponed, and the hopelessness of voting Liberal exposed, the result might have been very different. As we walked round his farm that Saturday afternoon, I told him of this maddening thought that kept running through my head : " If only my election had not been postponed."

" You know, I once had," he said, " a terrible sorrow, when my little girl died. I could not get away from it. At every hour of the day I used to say, ' If only Myfanwy were here ! ' I think it was Winston who said to me, ' Why point a spear at your own breast ? ' " After that my own disappointment at my thwarted ambitions seemed a tawdry business.

The week-end extended several days, and, refreshed, I returned to London. Mr. Lloyd George's last words to me as he said good-bye were, " There is an old Stock Exchange saying which I have tried to remember all through my life. It is, ' Don't job backwards. ' " Unlike most pieces of advice from the old to the young, the giver of it has taken it himself. Mr. Lloyd George has never " jobbed backwards."

## CHAPTER III

### MY WORLD TOUR GAMBLE

IN JUNE 1930 the slump ceased for me to be an impersonal matter of trade returns. I became unemployed myself. The *Daily News*, with which I had been associated since 1926, opened its mouth and swallowed the *Daily Chronicle*. I had successfully survived the amalgamation with the *Westminster Gazette* two years before, but this was a much bigger event.

The *Chronicle* was, on the surface, a going concern. It had a circulation of 800,000—larger indeed than the *Daily News*. But for unstable finance it would have been in a secure position. It was involved indirectly in the Hatry crash. It was pledged to the banks, and the banks demanded a sale. No independent purchaser could be found. It was a far cry from 1927, when Mr. Lloyd George had liquidated his newspaper proprietorship at a figure round two and a half millions. In addition, he had secured an explicit assurance that it would not be sold away from the support of Liberal policies. A triumphant Liberalism before the war only supported two Liberal papers in London. It was now obviously beyond the reach of the attenuated and dispirited forces of 1930. The end of one paper was inevitable, and when the staff assembled at Salisbury Square as usual on a Sunday afternoon it was to learn that the *Chronicle* had ceased to exist.

But this time it was assimilation and not absorption. Work had to be found for thirty per cent of the *Chronicle* staff. The tragedy about newspaper production from the point of view of working journalists is that it takes no more men on the editorial side to produce a paper with a circulation of two million than it does to produce a paper with a circulation of one million. The amalgamation of two papers inevitably means wholesale dismissals, for it leaves twice as many men to do the same amount of work.

I was one of the first to go. It was perfectly fair. I was young. I was unmarried, and I was not particularly competent. I could write polemics from a leader-writer's chair, but I was far too diffident for the rough-and-tumble of reporting.

I shut my eyes, and some of the humiliations of unsuccessful reporting come back—talking to Mr. McKenna's footman in lieu of Mr. McKenna; waiting outside Bedford Gaol on the chance of getting an interview (I forget why it was needed) with the Governor; trying to secure information from the doorkeeper of the Ministry of Transport about a girl who had passed first into the Civil Service; Mr. Ramsay MacDonald being rude about the *Daily News* at Liverpool Street station; asking Mr. Duff Cooper what he was going to call his new-born son. I would have three of that kind of commission in a morning. I should not have minded them if only I had ever obtained any success. To this day I do not know what the good reporter does when the Dean of St. Paul's sends down word, through his parlourmaid, that he never sees "gentlemen of the Press."

But here I was, just twenty-eight years of age, with five years of experience of Fleet Street, and without having made any particular mark in it, out in the cold world, competing in a market that, owing to continuous amalgamations of newspapers, was shrinking year by year. I paid a last look from the Press Gallery at the House of Commons, to estimate the chances in an arena where still lay my main ambitions. Was there any hope there?

Labour, still in power, was blissfully unaware of the doom that awaited it. The complacency of politicians is always astounding, but in the case of Labour it was staggering. They never believed that the rising tide of unemployment held any warning for them. It affected other parties, but, so they argued, nothing could withstand the onward march of Labour. So they sat sprawling on their benches, jeering at opponents, and flogging themselves into a passion if any damaging counter-attack was made upon them. The Liberals had lost the command of the situation. At one

time it looked as if the band of fifty-eight would hold together. Wheeling right or left at the word of command, they could have dominated the position and extorted from the Government that electoral reform which alone could secure their future. That was Mr. Lloyd George's strategy.

But it broke down at the first important engagement. The order was given to vote against the second reading of the Coal Bill. It meant, if fully carried out, the defeat of the Bill. A dissolution was very unlikely, as it would have meant an election within six months of the Government taking office. It was almost certain that Mr. MacDonald would accept the rebuff, and treat the Liberals with more consideration in the future. The only difficulty was that only some forty of the fifty-eight obeyed the Whip. Four Liberals voted with the Government. There were abstentions among the Conservatives, and the second reading was carried by a majority of eight. It is strange to recall that among the Liberals who came to the rescue of the Labour Government was Mr. Walter Runciman, who now sits in a National Government while Mr. Lloyd George, whose order he disobeyed, speaks from the Opposition benches.

From the moment that the Coal Bill received its second reading the Liberal position was hopeless. It had proved that the Liberals could threaten, but that, when it came to a test, the revolver was not loaded. All that the Conservatives—crippled by the last election, and riddled with dissensions though they were—need do was to wait patiently for the disintegration of Liberalism, and the inevitable triumph that would follow an appeal to the country.

England was clearly no place for a young Liberal with political ambitions. So I examined my assets. All that they consisted of was a few hundred pounds saved by a fairly judicious investment in the years of boom. On these I raised a loan and set off round the world. It was a gamble. Was I a journalist or not? Opportunity could alone show. I was not over sanguine. I spent £50 in becoming a student of the Inner Temple. There seemed no harm in a reinsurance.

## CHAPTER IV

### LIBERAL LEAVE-TAKINGS

**B**EFORE MY DEPARTURE I went down to Churt to say good-bye to Mr. Lloyd George.

It was obvious that the association of Liberals with the Labour Party, never properly cemented, was approaching breaking point. He was vehemently opposed to the idea of a Liberal-Labour alliance. I find the following notes in my diary: "Whom," he said, "can they point to on the Government side who favour it? Kenworthy and Jowitt. Not one single responsible leader will look at it. It is very different with the Tories. We could go to them and say, 'If we turn the Government out, what will you do for us?' They would say, 'Come along and let us do a deal.'"

He was scathing on the Government. "You know that we now have a Liberal-Labour unemployment committee formed. I cannot get it called. Hands are lifted in horror when I suggest it meeting on Saturday. No bourgeois Government was a tenth as jealous of its week-ends as they are."

"His idea is to present plans to the Government, at the end of September, for dealing with unemployment on the lines of the Liberal programme embodied in, 'We Can Conquer Unemployment.' If they accept them, he will bargain with them for electoral reform; if they refuse them, he will go into opposition, giving them a majority on routine affairs until after the Imperial and Round Table Conferences.

"L. G. alarmed at position in India. He is afraid that Wedgwood is committed to the policy of Dominion Status if all Indian representatives demand it. Benn, he added, is terrified of achieving a Black-and-Tan reputation. We

talked about the Civil Disobedience movement, and the difficulties of dealing with boys who lay down in front of trams and refused to move. There is an extraordinary strain of hardness that comes out in L. G. when he is not dealing with the Welsh Non-conformist or the Welsh and English peasant. I am not surprised by the story that it was he who pushed the policy of the Black and Tans against the advice of his Conservative colleagues."

My diary ends here, but I recall that I continued to plead for a policy either of overthrow of the Labour Government or, in default of that, of more generous terms of support. I was called a defeatist.

It is strange to recall this conversation now. When I entered the House of Commons fifteen months later—at that time nothing seemed more improbable—it was in support of a National Government of the Right, while Mr. Lloyd George, the most unsparing of Labour's critics, remained in opposition with the sorry remnant that survived the Labour *débâcle* of October 1931. So far from being harsh about Congress rebels, he thought that the arrest of Mr. Gandhi in January 1932 had been precipitate.

Before departure I paid a visit to the Liberal Summer School, to which I had been faithful ever since I came down from Oxford. Here is my entry in my diary: "*July 31st, 1930*—Same old crowd. Rather thinned perhaps. Guedalla sparkling as chairman. Scathing on condition of Parliamentary Liberal Party 'in chronic state of mutiny on ship carrying our cargo.' Pleasing metaphor of tipster foretelling the winner of this year's Oaks wearing trousers obviously indicative of the fact that he had not foretold the winner of last year's Oaks. Herbert Samuel rather dismal. Lights gave out in the middle, as well they might. Have I attended the last meeting of an organised Liberal Party?

"Took chair for Sir Robert Hamilton, who was lecturing on the problems of East Africa."

When I next met Sir Robert, it was to accept his invitation to become his Parliamentary Private Secretary, when he

was Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. Labour had fallen. The convulsion had been so great that it had even put Free Trade Liberals on to the Treasury Bench. The party that had seemed doomed to complete extinction had been given an almost miraculous new lease of life.

## CHAPTER V

### SEASICKNESS AND LORD DAWSON

SO I SET OFF on the *Empress of Australia* on what appeared a quite insane voyage. I had a round-the-world ticket and about a hundred pounds in cash. My only other asset was a political secretaryship to Lord Beauchamp. He was re-visiting New South Wales, where he had been Governor thirty years before, and wanted some help with his speeches. When that was over he was to return through the United States, and I was to plunge on alone to India.

My only memories of the voyage are of seasickness, Lord and Lady Dawson, and the St. Lawrence. The connection between Lord Dawson and seasickness is that he said that he had no remedy for it—that no doctor had. The sea means to me nothing but successive bouts of humiliating illness. It has one advantage : I never envy anyone their winter's cruise. Steamship companies may pipe to me in their most lyrical prose, but I will not dance. I know what a sham it all is. That " warm blue sea lapping from the quiet misty dawns to the clear cool evenings—those golden islands where it is summer always— . . . golden wines, tempting food, deep comfort, willing service "—they are for others. For me it is tossing about in a bunk too small for my legs, with an exasperatingly cheerful steward saying, " You will feel all right, sir, when you get on deck ; fresh air is what you want." One tries it, and in ten minutes one is on one's back again in convulsions. But the steward still goes on with the same maddening prescription, with the pained expression on his face of one who is dealing with a man with no guts. They remind me of the charlatans who advertise themselves as stammering curers. How I suffered from them in my youth ! The cure was so simple. All it consisted of was breathing exercises. If only you took a long, deep breath, the stammer disappeared. But it did not, and one



returned to one's long-suffering parents stammering rather worse than before. But the old rogues had covered themselves completely, for they blandly said that I was not doing the exercises properly ; that they did not profess to cure stammering, only to teach the stammerer to cure himself ; and so on through the whole gamut of mumbo-jummery. The assumption presumably was that one liked stammering.

What is never sufficiently realised is that most stammering has its roots, not in defective breathing, but in nerves. It is with strangers, or on the most important occasions, that the average stammerer is at his worst. I went through an election campaign with hardly a suspicion of an impediment, but my maiden speech in the House of Commons was one agonising stutter after another. So it is with seasickness. I have so lost confidence that I have been all but sick in the boat-train at the mere thought of the smell of paint, and hot, stale food, and the monotonous roll, that lay two hours ahead.

This voyage across the Atlantic was one long horror. I managed to survive until the service on Sunday, the morning after we had left Southampton. Then came the sermon, which began on a text of the beauties of travel. At that moment the liner gave a tremendous lurch, and I hastily retired from the dining-room to my cabin, there to meditate on what exactly were the beauties of travel.

But I remember the journey for one remark of Lord Dawson. We were talking of life after death in the way one does on board ship when it is dark, and there is no view from the deck-rails, but a limitless expanse of ocean, so suggestive of eternity. I asked him whether his enormous experience as a doctor, watching death coming in every conceivable shape, had confirmed or weakened his faith in eternal life. His answer was somehow strangely reassuring. "Most certainly it has confirmed my belief in immortality. Over and over again I have seen with dying men and women that, hours before death comes, something has gone. They are still breathing, but something—the soul, the life-force, call it what you will—has vanished."

Lord Dawson is in the first rank in his profession, but probably his real greatness is his selflessness. He is always ready and anxious to call in the best available opinion. But I know of no man to whom I would more willingly go in a difficulty. He is kindly, shrewd, tolerant—all that ought to be meant by the phrase “a man of the world.” At the time of the King’s illness I am not at all sure he was not almost as valuable at the end of a telephone as he was at the King’s bedside. His handling of the Press was superb. Night after night he would not get to his bed until the early hours of the morning, only to be awakened by enterprising reporters from the ends of the world clamouring for a “special message” on the King’s condition. A lesser man would have been excessively rude, and made a good story of it at his next dinner-party. He was not merely courteous, but he was informative. He would dispose of the most ludicrous rumours with a tolerant chuckle—even the one that had a great vogue in Fleet Street for twelve hours, that “His Majesty was really dead.” The result was that the public did have from day to day absolutely reliable information, and the whole world was able to watch in sympathy the King’s heroic struggle back from the shadows.

My only other memory is of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, with icebergs standing sentinel and the sun rising behind the wooded islands, and the glorious sense of peace after the storm that almost makes the storm worth while. For the first time I felt the excitement of travel depicted on the steamship posters.

## CHAPTER VI

### TRIUMPH OF EMPIRE

I FELT the excitement again when I reached my hotel bedroom in the Château Frontenac in Quebec. A magnificent storm was in progress, and from my window I could see the whole panorama of Quebec, bisected by the mighty St. Lawrence, lit up by flashes of lightning.

Quebec itself is a thrilling place. It is so easy to re-people it with the past. The site of Wolfe's landing is quite unaltered. No incongruous memorial marks the spot. There, outside the town, is the steep wooded hill-side up which he and his men scrambled, as quiet and desolate as it must have been 180 years ago. All that has changed is a certain silting up of the river which has made possible the construction of a road between the cliff and the St. Lawrence. The residence of the Governor-General in the fort carries the same authentic atmosphere of the past. One has the strange feeling that the redcoats are still doing sentry duty outside, and that the town is only precariously held. Not even the fact that Lady Willingdon, the then Vice-Reine, had once more given way to her passion for mauve decorations altogether dispelled the attractive illusion.

Quebec was my first experience of the extraordinary success of British colonisation. A French town and the Union Jack floating over its *hôtel de ville*—that is the paradox of Quebec. It is just a corner of France on the American continent. Its population is nine-tenths French. French is the language spoken in the Parliament House. Even the architecture is French. There is only one skyscraper in the whole town. For the rest, the houses, with their pleasant low roofs, their wooden verandahs, and their green shutters, might have been transported bodily from Picardy. The three principal newspapers are printed entirely in French.

Even that solid sense of political cohesion which is the

invariable mark of hostile minorities is breaking down. Since the introduction of self-government the French-Canadians had given unwavering support to the Liberals as being the less imperialist of the two parties. But, at the elections held the month before, economic discontent had triumphed over traditional sentiment, and the Conservatives, to the amazement even of themselves, carried off a third of the sixty-five seats. What is the strange secret that makes it possible for a French town—and indeed a French province, several times the size of Great Britain—to owe contented allegiance to a foreign Government?

The answer involves another paradox. The inhabitants of Quebec are French, but they have no attachment to France. They have no contact with their mother country. The defeat and death of Montcalm cut off the stream of emigration from France, and it has never flowed since. The French-speaking families in Quebec trace their Canadian descent for seven or eight generations. In the war the French-Canadian troops preferred to be attached to the Canadians rather than to the French. As a Canadian Frenchman put it to me: "France to us is a foreign country."

But an important factor in French contentment is the way in which the Canadian Government has been at pains to remove all excuses for a feeling of inferiority in the French. They have complete freedom for self-expression. Even the Heights of Abraham hold no bitterness, for on every memorial the bravery of both French and English is jointly commemorated. In the last century a statue to Wolfe was defaced by the French in a frenzy of Nationalist fervour. Now it is held in universal reverence, for opposite the name of the conqueror is the name of the gallant Montcalm, whom he defeated.

Perhaps the foundation, however, of the *entente cordiale* is the essential conservatism of the French. The main currents of the civilisation of the United States have passed them by. One-horsed *calèches* still rattle up the steep cobbled streets of Quebec. More horses are to be found there than in any town in Canada. Over its quiet squares, its boulevards,

its Governor-General's residence, its Anglican cathedral, there seems to brood even now the tranquil atmosphere of the old colonial days. Quebec in essentials has not changed; it is not without political significance that Quebec is the only province that has never tried Prohibition.

The French have lived for 150 years with the British flag flying on the citadel that was once their own. That in itself provides them with 150 reasons for desiring to continue to do so.

## CHAPTER VII

### SHALL WE EVER LOSE CANADA?

**S**HALL we ever lose Canada? I began to examine the problem the next day at the railway station, when we struck out west for Vancouver by way of Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and the Rockies. Throughout my tour I always had a prolonged opportunity for reflection and study on railway platforms, for Lord Beauchamp was never happy unless he was on the station at least half an hour before the train was timed to start. I once asked him whether he had ever missed a train in his life. "Yes," he gravely replied, "once, in 1895, and then I intended to do so."

My first impression on the platform was one of surprise at how un-English it all seemed. The harsh accents of the men, the tailoring of their clothes, their square-shaped heads, the profusion of horn-rimmed spectacles, the chewing of cigars, the general atmosphere of aggressive bustle was all vividly reminiscent of a Hollywood picture of New York. The bookstall was stocked almost exclusively with American magazines stuffed from cover to cover with advertisements of the products of Philadelphia and Detroit.

The train steamed out, and the Canadian cities began to pass by our carriage window. It all seemed exactly like my memories of a visit to the States a few years before. There was the same skyscraper architecture, the same rectangular street plan—like a child's drawing of the perfect city. We were even followed by the same mournful bell which accompanies all trains in the United States. When I first heard it, I used to reflect how strange it was that I always seemed to be arriving in towns at the hour of divine service. I heard strange tongues as I went rocking down the train to the dining-car—not merely French, but German and Czech and Italian. There floated back to my memory a speech of the Bishop of London, who had complained on a recent visit,

that Canada was being peopled "by Galicians, Poles, and God knows who"—much to the indignation of the Galicians and the Poles, but particularly the God-knows-whos. I looked up my book of reference, and discovered that hardly more than half of the population of Canada was British, and that even that proportion was on the decrease.

I say that I was surprised by all this because I had a few years before come over to Canada from the United States, and thought it, in comparison, a corner of England. It was true that it was only for a few minutes' stroll before breakfast at Niagara Falls, but the impression of a new country was very vivid and definite. Now it seemed as much a province of the United States as Bavaria is of Germany.

Arrived at Montreal I began to get a corrective. I attended a luncheon of the Canada Club. Lord Dawson, who had gone on in front of us, was the chief guest. His subject was the benefits of alcohol, and he described them as "an attribute of the art of living." Unfortunately there was no practical demonstration of them, for we all chastely drank iced water. But apart from that the gathering was fervently, even aggressively, English. There was no doubt where they looked for guidance and inspiration.

I dined with a group of young men the same night, and we discussed the whole problem of the possible secession of Canada to join herself with the United States. It was so interesting that I missed the midnight train to Toronto. They were of one mind that absorption was out of the question. The secessionist party had no more strength or prestige than the Communists in England. "The youth movements are enthusiastically pro-British," said an undergraduate in his fourth year at Toronto. "It is Oxford, not Yale, that we try and copy. Your afternoon tea, for instance, which in the States is regarded by every he-man as effeminate, like gloves and walking-sticks, is becoming quite an institution here." "All my boys," said a schoolmaster, "range themselves on the side of the English in historical controversies, however remote. They are always our side."

As I passed on through Canada, I began to realise how

solidly Canada had been reared in British traditions. The Canadian Pacific railroad itself had been built by British enterprise, and financed by British capital. The very direction of her transcontinental railways indicate the mentality in which they were created. What better indication could there be of the determination of Canada to maintain her independence from the United States than by the fact that they run from east to west and not from north to south? Then there are her political institutions. The posters of the recent election were still on the hoardings, and I could read the appeals of the Conservative and Liberal Parties, differing remarkably little from the electioneering methods in England. What greater difference could there be, too, from the relative respect for law and order in Toronto than, say, in Buffalo, only a few dozen miles over the frontier?

But, undoubtedly, there are great temptations for Canada to join with the United States. They are clearly designed by nature for one geographical unit. High and irrational tariff walls dam up wealth that if allowed to flow freely would add to the prosperity of both of them. Particularly would such a union benefit the landholders on the border. Another El Dorado in real estate would be opened up in the border provinces.

Nor did I find any desire for closer union with the Empire. Some of the present links will certainly go. The existence of the English Privy Council as a final court of appeal in certain Canadian suits is undoubtedly unpopular.

Canada demands the full rights of independent nationhood. I even heard young men maintain that she had a right to declare war independent of the decisions of Downing Street.

I did not realise till I visited Canada how great had been the change since 1914. So far as the Imperial connection is concerned there is nothing left but sentiment.

The Ottawa Agreements have not altered the position. If it ever comes to a struggle—and God forbid that it should—between the Imperial *Zollverein* and Canadian interests, nationalism will win every time.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE WORLD'S FIERCEST GAMBLES

**T**O THE TRAVELLER crossing the Dominion for the first time there is something strangely thrilling about the prairie provinces of Western Canada, the greatest granary in the world, where an average crop of 400 million bushels of wheat is produced every year, or rather more than twice as much as even the teeming population of Great Britain can consume in a year.

After twenty-four hours of rocks and forests and lakes, the train suddenly enters a golden plain. For 750 miles there is nothing but rolling cornfields, at rare intervals interrupted by a scattered lonely township—just a few shacks, an agricultural hall, and a wooden church. The only sound is the pleasant whirr of the reaper, still, to a surprising extent, drawn by horses, slowly turning the smiling wheat into sheaves. It is in fact the Canada of the posters and steamship offices.

Even more true to pictures are the wheat towns where corn is bought and sold. I “stopped off,” as the vivid phrase is out there, for a night at Winnipeg. It was like stepping straight out into a Woolly-West film. Here were authentic cowboy hats, and men, coatless, in every kind of gay and aggressive shirt.

Winnipeg forty years ago was a haphazard collection of wooden shacks ; it is now a struggling, untidy, modern town of a quarter of a million inhabitants. There are men living in it to-day who can remember driving cattle down the vast main street now bisected by a double tram-line. The first train only reached Winnipeg in 1875 ; its engine is now housed in the park, and flowers come out of its funnel, and geraniums grow in its tender.

For all its physical changes, Winnipeg remains spiritually the same. It is the law of the jungle here, as on the

wheatfields, that still operates. Men agree to work on the farms twelve and fourteen hours a day in the harvest or they starve ; equally, in Winnipeg, they gamble successfully on the Grain Exchange, or they go under. That was why there were so many failures among the British harvesters who were sent out, from among the unemployed miners, to deal with a bumper crop. They were used to different conditions of work. There is no trades-union organisation nor limitation of hours of labour in Canada at harvest-time in the prairie provinces. The competition is quite ruthless. There is no mercy to the failure.

The Grain Exchange is, indeed, pure melodrama. Here are the boards, with the prices chalked up of wheat in the other grain centres of the continent, like Chicago and Minneapolis, and a surging mass of shouting, sweating men in front of them. The price for a moment remains stationary, and the shouting dies, as in a dull moment in a cup-tie final.

It suddenly starts to rocket again, and the bidding becomes deafening. At times the yells from the wheat-pit, the circular rostrum on which the members of the Exchange make their bids, are so fierce as to be reminiscent of the Regent's Park lion-house at feeding-time. It is difficult to recall that this tumult and turmoil represent the operation of the dull old economic law of supply and demand.

Occasionally there may be moments of frenzied excitement. Panic seizes the market, prices come tumbling down. Then the big man appears. He rushes into the wheat-pit, buys as heavily as others are selling, stops the rot, and sends the prices soaring up again. Sometimes he fails, and merely accentuates the crash. I am surprised that Arthur Collins never thought of the grain market for a big scene in his autumn productions at Drury Lane.

There is no excuse for dullness in Western Canada. An unexpected hailstorm may destroy a year's earnings of a farmer, and a sudden fall of a few cents in Chicago's wheat prices may ruin half the operators in Winnipeg.

At the moment, all eyes were anxiously turned on Russia.

For the first time since the Revolution she was emerging as a competitor in the grain market. But, if it were not Russia, it would be something else that would be worrying them. The grain trade is the most precarious in the world. The amusements reflect the pace at which life is lived. I was lured on to a mysterious contraption known as the "Roller Coaster." I had been on the Giant Racer at Wembley, and thought I knew the worst. But it was a child's switch-back compared to this. The sensation was like that of going down the side of a house on roller skates, and it was repeated at least ten times in one minute.

The climate itself demands qualities of adaptability and endurance. It is a country of sweltering summers and arctic winters, temperatures of 100 degrees in the shade in the summer alternate with winter records of 50 degrees below zero.

Life in Western Canada is, as it has always been, hard and crude, elemental and colourful. It is emphatically a country where men still have to be men, and where success goes only to the strong.

But it was the wheat-pit that made the deepest impression. I could not get out of my head that scene from the gallery—that bellowing "rugger scrum" selling wheat they had not got at prices that would never be paid.

It seemed such a crazy way of distributing the world's wealth. There were signs that the system was about to be put to an unprecedented strain. The collapse of prices had already begun. Before I caught the midnight train on to the Rockies, I was taken round the residential areas. I was pointed out mansions, which a few months before had been the scenes of uproarious entertainment, shuttered and silent.

I heard those tales of spectacular suicides which were soon to become a commonplace of every large-scale town from London to Tokio. They were new then.

So was the reason given for the collapse in prices. It was argued that mankind as a whole was eating less bread. The spread of central heating was the cause. Men were

warmer than they used to be, so they did not need to eat as much bread.

When I arrived in India, six months later, and found two hundred million people unable to afford one meal a day, I realised that Winnipeg must find a less ingenuous reason for its misfortunes.

## CHAPTER IX

### MUSICAL COMEDY MOUNTAINS

IT WAS THROUGH GRUELLING HEAT that I made my way from Winnipeg to the Rockies to catch up with Lord Beauchamp, who was now waiting for me at Banff.

Why is it that in England a railway journey is always so much more exciting than anywhere else? I suppose it is that the speed is so much faster and the distances so much shorter. I never get the same thrill elsewhere as I do when the 11.45 morning express from Bristol, on its raging, tearing way to London, gathers speed just by the engine-sheds at Swindon and, with a whistle that is positively demoniacal, roars through the station, making of it a nightmare confusion of porters and bookstalls. It is a tame business, in contrast, lumbering day after day across a continent at a leisurely forty miles an hour.

But monotony of scenery was new to me then. I sat enthralled on the platform of the last carriage, watching in the midday glare the single line bisecting the golden corn, and growing longer and longer behind me until it seemed to merge itself in eternity.

Then there is the sudden, startling change of atmosphere. You are in the sweltering wheat-plains one afternoon, and the next morning you wake to find yourself in the champagne air of towering mountains. The contrast between Delhi and Simla in the hot weather is not greater than that between Winnipeg and Banff.

I felt as if I had entered paradise—or the pantomime of my childhood sensations, which is the same thing.

The Canadian Rockies are so beautiful that they seem almost unreal. When I first saw the full glory of Lake Louise I wanted to pinch myself to make sure I was really awake. In fact, some parts of them are pure musical comedy.

Groups of horsemen can be seen riding through the

pinewoods as straight and immaculate as any male chorus at Drury Lane. Occasionally a member of the Canadian Mounted Police appears on the horizon, complete with red tunic and cowboy hat, and one instinctively feels that he is the young lead, and that in a few seconds he will get his cue for his song.

The view from my hotel window at Banff was like the drop scene of *Rose Marie*. There was a cottage on the spur of a mountain opposite, and when the lights shone out of it at night I felt that Miss Edith Day would appear at any moment, the flood lights would be switched on, and we should all be applauding the first act.

Banff itself is perhaps a little sophisticated. The entrance to the hotel is flanked by two immense Red Indians, in full array, smoking pipes of peace, and no doubt well paid by the management. There is also the inevitable Rotary Club, where Lord Beauchamp and I had to make speeches about service in business, and hands across the water, on a background of pure Babbitty.

But once get away from this strange mixture of a Middle West town and a Riviera resort and one is in virgin forest. There is as yet no road through the mountains to the coast. The only passage is a single railway-line to Vancouver. Such roads as exist are little more than mountain tracks, and, though I was there in holiday-time, I found fewer cars even than there are on the west coast of Ireland.

Even the beauty of the scenery is artificial only in places. For hundreds of miles the pinewoods can find no foothold and the mountains are exposed in all their rugged, lonely grandeur. It is a glorious sanctuary for wild animals. Beavers are as common as water-rats in England, and there are notices at several points with the grim warning that "it is dangerous to feed the bears." Even the old-time trapper maintains a precarious existence in this lonely wilderness of pine and rock. The fact is that it is only half a century since the Rockies were opened up to man. The railway was not cut through them until the early 'eighties, and until it came the Red Indian reigned supreme.

What is now the golf-course of the hotel at Banff was, fifty years ago, the place where the Red Indians lashed themselves into the temper appropriate to carrying on a tribal war with their neighbours. Now they are herded into comfortable reservations and have become rather pathetically tame and soft. Elderly people living in Vancouver can remember when they were a real menace to life and property, and when the mountains which housed them were an impenetrable iron curtain.

But, for once, though man has conquered he has not despoiled. The Rocky Mountains remain in all their elemental loveliness. Neither petrol-pumps nor racing-motor tracks have arrived to stain their virginity. Mr. Winston Churchill, who visited them the year before last, used to get up every morning at four o'clock to see the sun rise and record it with his paint-brush. For the only time in my life I wanted to follow Mr. Churchill's lead. But, to be entirely truthful, the Rockies are not always like this. The day we set off to Vancouver there was nothing to be seen but rain and clouds. Lord Beauchamp was in a fever to be off, and we arrived at the station rather earlier than usual. I felt far less lyrical about the Rockies.

On the way to Vancouver the train stopped to enable the passengers to get out and see the view. No doubt, on any other day but the one on which I travelled, it rivals the seven wonders of the world, but on this particular day it was non-existent ; only ghostly shapes, and a waterfall roaring off-stage.

## CHAPTER X

### ISLAND PARADISE OF THE PACIFIC

VANCOUVER the next morning was lovely, with its harbour almost as grand as the approach to Quebec, and its odd Spanish atmosphere and un-American air of lassitude in the soft morning sunshine.

Very regretfully I embarked on a liner for another tedious bout of sea travel. It exceeded my worst anticipations.

It was an old ship, without any of the post-war comforts. It was very full, for its sister ship had foundered a fortnight before in the middle of the Pacific, and it was therefore carrying double its ordinary complement of passengers. It rolled badly and I was frightfully sick.

When finally we ran into tropical waters and I shakily made my first appearance in the saloon, it was to find a group of Australian politicians and squatters with an inexhaustible supply of parish pump gossip. They were also far advanced in their anecdotage. I hate stories about Englishmen and Scotchmen and Jews who do peculiar things on railway stations, but when they are repeated in various forms—and often, as the voyage advances, in the same form—at every meal over a period of twenty-four days, boredom borders on nausea.

In desperation I joined the bright young things. My diary brings back to me some of the horror of fathomless boredom and forced brightness.

*“August 22nd.*—Succumbed again to seasickness. Very rough night, and sick even when lying down. Beauchamp comes in to see me in the morning, but I am too ill to be even polite, and turn my face to the wall, pretending to be asleep. I struggle up to dinner. Advised to take cocktail as a sedative, but it proves to be an emetic.

*“August 23rd.*—Sick again. I have learnt one way of avoiding it—playing bridge for more than I can afford to lose. It worked well last night. But it is expensive.



" *August 24th.*—Played deck-tennis, but appear to have no sense of direction. The ring in my hand flies straight up to the roof. I tried another way and it flew straight out to sea, which was much more unpopular.

" *August 25th.*—Sports committee formed. What an insidious germ is this love of public life. The great men at the captain's table having declared twice a day that they wanted complete rest, and hoped that nobody would disturb them with requests to do any of the sports organisation, went in a body to the sports meeting, occupied the front seats, and all joyfully accepted nomination to the committee.

" Beauchamp worried because the steward will refer to him as 'Your Grace.' Should he say anything to him? I thought not.

" Learnt how to 'Vanderbilt' at contract bridge. An expensive tutelage. Stewards have broken out into white cotton uniforms, so we are really in the tropics.

" *August 26th.*—'Book tea.' Everybody going as *Journey's End*. How stupid I am at it! Threat of fancy-dress dance. Several people vowing that they hate it as much as I do and they won't go. But of course they don't, and will."

Fortunately there were two interludes to these interminable inanities. The first was at Honolulu, where, after nine days, the ship docked for a few hours. All boredom vanished the moment the ship began to nose its way into the harbour. It was all so completely different from anything that the West can show.

Little native boys swam round the ship and dived for the coins that we threw from the decks; for larger sums they would climb on to the ship itself and dive into the water from incredible heights. They held their booty between their teeth, and when they thought they had made enough for the day they swam back triumphantly to the shore.

The liner began to dock, and we found that the town band had turned out to greet us. They played us that haunting Hawaiian music, and before I was off the boat I wanted never to return to it. They garlanded us with sweet-smelling flowers, and, what with the soft music and the scent of

flowers and the glorious sunshine and the relief of being off that beastly ship I felt as if I knew at last the joys of the Garden of Eden.

Even the town itself, though it has over 50,000 inhabitants, did not disillusion me. It has lovely, spacious buildings in the tropical style ; great coconut-trees spread across its main streets ; there are garden seats on the pavements. None seems to have any serious work to do. In that steaming heat, work of any kind seems an outrage on nature ; even the gardeners contrive to sit down on the grass as they tend the flowers in the public parks. In this atmosphere of sunshine and lassitude it is somewhat of a shock to come upon a group of American sailors with white caps and horn-rimmed spectacles.

For there is no hustle about Honolulu. Indeed, it is really quite fortuitous that Honolulu belongs to the United States. The Hawaiian Islands, which were formerly the Sandwich Islands, were discovered by Captain Cook over 150 years ago. For the greater part of the nineteenth century they remained an independent kingdom, but when, in 1893, the reigning queen, Liliuokalani, died, a republic was proclaimed.

A year later this republic, through its legislature, petitioned for annexation by the United States, the nearest Great Power. In 1898, by a resolution of Congress, it became a part of the United States. Washington thereby made itself responsible for a League of Nations in miniature. There are in these islands 20,000 Hawaiians, 25,000 Chinese, 137,000 Japanese, 29,000 Portuguese, 63,000 Filipinos, and 38,000 Americans, British, Germans, and Russians.

I remember being driven to my hotel by a Hawaiian, being waited on by a Japanese, and having my hair cut by an American. But there are few racial riots. American Imperialism is far more on the pattern of Mr. Churchill than of Lord Irwin. In time of trouble the Americans police the streets with tear-gas. Uncle Sam treats the subjects of his empire no better and no worse than he treats his own people.

But his greatest ally in maintaining order remains the climate. The atmosphere of a Kew hothouse is not conducive to revolution. Moreover, the wants of the inhabitants are small, and no great expenditure of effort is required to satisfy them. A beachcomber might lie for weeks under a fruit-tree existing quite happily on the fruit that drops from it. He has no need to build himself a house, for Honolulu is the land of eternal summer. Sugar and pineapples are the staple products, and they grow as easily and as lusciously as grass after hot rain. A substantial part of the population spends a blissful existence in drowsy contemplation of the Pacific rollers as they rhythmically beat upon the shore.

Honolulu provides the honeymoon prescribed by Hollywood. I was not surprised, when I returned to the ship in the evening, to find many of the young married couples who had embarked at Vancouver were on board no longer. They were surf-riding in the moonlight on the long Pacific rollers ; or listening in some sunkissed creek to the gay chatter of the canaries, the parrots, the cockatoos, and the golden pheasants ; or catching once again, in some bizarre dance-hall, that Hawaiian music which they will never quite be able to get out of their minds all their lives.

I seem to be writing like a steamship advertisement myself. But Honolulu really is like that. It is the sophisticated tropics of fiction—artificial and slightly vulgar, extremely expensive, but not easily forgotten.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE HORRORS OF SURFING

I SPENT the afternoon surf-bathing. That should conjure up to the imagination tropical skies and rolling breakers, and the thrill of being whizzed over them, to the distant shore, standing upon a board with bright eyes and head erect. For me it brings back nothing but the sensations of drowning tempered by the terror of a pursuing shark.

I did not want to bathe at all. I cannot imagine anyone wanting to do anything in Honolulu. The average greenhouse at Kew is a Skegness of bracing wind compared to a morning at Honolulu. In that steamy heat the heartiest Rugger blue would become a beachcomber inside half an hour. The whole town is in a continuous state of sitting down.

Within ten minutes of leaving the ship all earthly ambition left me. I would have willingly refused the reversion of the Liberal stronghold of North Cornwall if it had entailed a hundred yards' walk. I just wanted to lie on my side in the shade and gaze for ever, in an ecstasy of animal content, at the distant rollers of the Pacific as they pounded upon the shore.

But it was not to be. I had not shut one eye before I was being hauled off to the bathing-sheds. I might have resisted more fiercely, but I had already spent three dollars on a journey of half a mile in a taxi, and the price of my lunch would have kept an English family in luxury for a week. I felt that I should be really in less peril in the sea. I little knew what awaited me.

They were all in the water by the time I was undressed, and I therefore entered the sea alone. After a walk of approximately a mile and a half I eventually caught them up. "Where is your surf-board?" they all shouted. Back I had to trudge through the water again in search of one. Finally

I found a man who purveyed them, but he refused to trust me with one until I paid him a dollar. All I had on me was a wet bathing-suit, but eventually we declared a moratorium, and I set off with my board over my shoulder with the uneasy suspicion that it was a rope round my neck.

By that time the party from the ship had almost reached the other side of the Pacific. A few hours later I caught them up, and I had the mysteries of surf-bathing explained to me. It all seemed delightfully easy. All one had to do was to wait for a roller, leap on to the board, and be carried wave upon wave to the distant shore. That was the theory. In practice it was the board only that was carried. I was swept off the board into a maelstrom, punched by an unseen giant six times in the ribs, and carried out at a hundred miles an hour to the open sea. Only the fact that I hit a sand-bank prevented me from being a bathing fatality.

A few hours later the others returned with their boards from the shore and explained to me how incredibly foolish I was. I tried to tell them that as a boy I had been regarded as very promising at croquet. They would not listen. A board was thrust into my hand, and once more I was risking death by suffocation. This time everything happened as before except that after the giant had punched me three times I felt a sudden grip at my legs. In a flash I knew it was a shark. Gathering every ounce of strength to my assistance, I made for the shore. It was like swimming in a nightmare. Sometimes the shark gained, sometimes I did. Finally, in the last stages of terror and exhaustion, I collapsed on the shore. When I came round again and was able to stagger back to my clothes, I found a large piece of seaweed firmly fastened round my legs. As it trailed behind me I was strangely reminded of the pursuing shark.

But my humiliations were not yet over. I had returned to safety without my board, and, before the afternoon was out, instead of paying one dollar for hiring it, I was paying four dollars for losing it. On the way back to the ship the others were saying what tremendous fun we had all had in the surf at Honolulu.

## CHAPTER XII

### A MORNING ON A SOUTH SEA ISLAND

**B**ACK ON THE SHIP again, life seemed less intolerable. Probably it was that I became less intolerable myself. I began to like these returning Australians, noisy but extraordinarily good-natured. I learnt not to hit the roof with the ring at deck-tennis, or, in an access of nervousness, throw it out to sea. I even attended the fancy-dress dance, and, I hope, became less repulsively shy. For seven days, too, the sea was like glass as we steamed through equatoria.

I therefore arrived in Suva in exactly the right frame of mind to appreciate a South Sea Island. Suva is as different from Honolulu as the seaside is from the Lido. It is the real thing, not a painted backcloth.

To go on shore at Suva is to step straight into the atmosphere of a South Sea island novel. I sensed it even before I left the ship, and, once on shore, literary memories flooded back to me with overpowering force. Here was the enervating, steamy heat of the tropics ; here the natives scantily dressed but all possessed of umbrellas ; here the authentic beachcomber, with dissipated eyes and dirty white trousers. I realised with a thrill that the world of Stevenson still existed.

Everybody seemed to be a character in a book. A letter of introduction led me to an enlarged village shop, where I found a delightful Englishman, also dressed for his part in shirt-sleeves and without a tie. He got out his car and we set off round the island. Even the car was romantic, for its driver was a reprieved murderer. He had murdered six men in his time, and was now a churchwarden.

Everybody seems to be a churchwarden in Suva. The natives were unrepentant cannibals fifty years ago, but now they are the most devout Christians. There is no need to

send missionaries to Suva. They have so many that they export them to convert the heathen elsewhere. The whole country, in fact, looks like the illustrations in a missionary magazine. There are schools where fuzzy-haired black boys are taught geography and carpentry, and mission churches and maternity welfare centres, and the whole gamut of missionary activity.

There are also hospitals—the inevitable concomitant of the white man's invasion. In the days of their barbarism disease was almost unknown. Forty years ago they had their first epidemic of measles. They did not understand the strange, hot fever that had infected them, and these new and horrible spots, so they rushed into the sea to try and get rid of them and were drowned by the hundred.

Since then they have grown sadly accustomed to white men's diseases. They have learnt, too, the evils inherent in some of his concoctions. I tasted Fijian rum, and, excellent though it was, I can understand the regulations that have to hedge its consumption.

I found a flower that seemed strangely symbolic of it all. It grows luxuriantly in all the hedges, but the instant a white man touches it, it crumples up and withers away. I thought that it was an idle legend until I put it to the test.

At the same time it would be absurd to give the impression that the natives are unhappy. They laugh and joke, even at the docks ; as if the huge banana-cases they were hurling about were toy balloons. The day a liner arrives the whole island is in carnival. The struggle for existence is very mild. There is no unemployment, and, even if there were, the kindly fruits of the earth would provide all that was required for existence. Bananas are as common as nettles, and clams as easy to come by as rabbits in Australia.

The only element of discord is the Indians, who form a quarter of the population and were brought over by the sugar-planters. The fever of unrest has caught them across the 10,000 miles of ocean that separate them from Gandhi. They return members to parliament, but there has been a

spectacular secession because they do not always get what they want.

For the rest, the Fijians are content to entrust their destiny to the guiding hand of Downing Street. The Governor is sent out by the Colonial Office, and is responsible direct to it. He rules through parliament and an executive council, but in the last resort he has the power of a primitive chief. The natives, indeed, look upon him as such. The Governor's house was burnt down recently, and so they built him in his garden a great hut modelled on their own primitive dwellings as a sign of their sympathy. The Fijians are children, and they are ruled as children.

My last impression of Suva is of luncheon at Government House. A long, imposing drive leads up to the great house ; a manservant takes my hat ; an aide-de-camp bustles in ; the drawing-room door is thrown open, and, heralded by the imposing introduction, " Your Excellency, I have pleasure in presenting Mr. Robert Bernays," I am caught up in the pomp of Imperial power. There are round the luncheon-table all the appanages of the British raj : the good-looking, soldierly Governor, intelligent and cultured—the supply of these seems endless—his charming and handsome wife ; the aide-de-camp with faded Etonian tie ; a couple of English visitors ; white wine, coffee, and conversation about the test match and Winston. A car is ordered, and I crash down the hill to catch the boat, with the strange feeling that, though I have visited Suva for the first time, I have seen it all before.



## CHAPTER XIII

### I LOOK AT SYDNEY

THE INTERMINABLE VOYAGE is over, and faintly, through field-glasses, it is possible to see the iron girders of the gigantic Sydney Bridge. The Greeks never cried, "The sea, the sea," more eagerly than I shouted, "The shore, the shore." For the crossing from Auckland to Sydney is the worst that I have ever experienced. I had imagined that New Zealand and Sydney were separated by an expanse of water no wider than that between England and Ireland. Actually the crossing takes three days. And what a three days ! It was like a bad Channel crossing multiplied and extended from one hour to sixty-four hours.

The only consolation in seasickness is that it does not last. The moment that the ship ceases to heave I am on deck, and as hungry as I was at school in wartime. Not till I saw the Taj did I get a greater thrill than I experienced that glorious spring morning as bay after bay of that incomparable harbour opened itself before us. I was in love with Sydney before I had landed.

That morning I lunched with the Premier of New South Wales, and in a few minutes I was back again in the atmosphere of the Canada that I had left a month before. The plague had spread here. Australia, too, was in the paralysis of depression. Mr. Bavin was on the eve of an election to be fought on sweeping cuts in salaries and social services. In the week-end that followed, I was able to see something of the havoc that was being wrought.

For thirty years Sydney had almost uninterrupted prosperity. She did not know what a bout of bad trade meant, and temporarily it had almost knocked her out.

Confidence had flown away. Offices were for sale ; shops were empty. The streets were no more crowded than is Regent Street on a Sunday afternoon ; the parks had

become a doss-house for the unemployed, and, since there was no dole, there was more begging than in any town in England.

But the gaiety remained. It is the climate. It is difficult to remain long depressed in continuous sunshine and blue skies, and with all the fun of the seaside at the dockyard gate.

It is not that Sydney people are heartless. It is just that their natural fund of gaiety is so inexhaustible that no drought of depression, however severe or prolonged, can drain it. It would be the same in England if the Mediterranean could be transferred to Middlesbrough and the Lido to Liverpool.

For Sydney is really an amazing city. It is a mixture of Chatham and Cannes. Side by side with the tumult and turmoil of a dockyard town is the sunshine and gaiety of a Riviera resort. Surf-bathing is possible within a few minutes of the heart of the city ; villas and beaches which Englishmen would journey half across Europe to reach are within a short tram-ride of the principal streets.

There is no holiday exodus from the city to the seaside, for the city is by the seaside. Beach after beach stretches out from both sides of Sydney, and each one possesses the sands of East Anglia, the scenery of Devonshire, and the surfing opportunities of Honolulu.

They told me that Sydney was depressed. I tremble to think what orgiastic scenes there must be when it is prosperous. For me it is the gayest city in the world. There is no "season" here, in the London sense. It seems to be all "season." They dance six nights a week. And what dances, too ! There was a dance at Government House in the most perfect setting I think I have ever seen. The long ballroom, stretching half way across the house, opened out on to lawns that sloped down to the incomparable harbour. It was a warm night, and at the end of every dance the ballroom emptied into the gardens. The lighted fountains, the long dresses of the girls, and the gay uniforms of the men in the Services made it reminiscent of pre-war Vienna.

The next night Sydney society transferred itself to the deck

of a battle-cruiser, and we exchanged flower-gardens for lapping water, glittering fountains for harbour lights, and the echoes of Monte Carlo for memories of Imperial Austria.

So it goes on. They never grow tired. A party is not voted a success unless it ends at four o'clock the next morning over bacon and eggs. Yet the men are in their offices at nine o'clock as if they had had the Englishmen's eight-hour sleep.

With it all they seemed to spend most of their afternoons at the races and their evenings on the beaches. I am told that there is a race-meeting every day in Australia, though there are only six million people to go to them. Everybody goes to them.

As for the beaches, Blackpool sands on August Bank Holiday are empty compared with the beach at Bondi. The sea is sometimes so full that the bathers literally stand wedged up against one another like a crowd at a football final. Surf-bathing is the great attraction. But it is unpleasantly dangerous. The sharks come in very close, and not infrequently there are the most frightful tragedies. On all the principal beaches there is a corps of "live-savers"—young men who look like advertisements for Sandoz. I can think of few more searching demands on human courage than that presented by a fellow human being in the clutches of a shark. Some of these life-savers bear terrible scars of their heroism.

Surf-bathing appears to have a remarkable effect on the human figure. I can only imagine that it is the explanation for the extraordinary beauty of the Australian girls: that, and the almost perpetual sunshine. Sydney climate, at any rate in October and November, is continuous crisp sunshine, like the first fine spring day in an English March.

This perpetual fine weather has undoubtedly an effect on the Australian character. From the cradle the Australian boys and girls are in the open air. In consequence, sport is their sole recreation and physical fitness is a fetish. It accounts for something of the spiritual deadness of Australia. They are never thrown back upon themselves for their entertainment. There is so seldom a wet Saturday afternoon when

there is any temptation to curl up in front of the fire and read a book. Less books are read per head in Australia than in any of the English-speaking dominions.

The arts are almost entirely neglected. Those who are interested turn their eyes longingly to Europe. There is very little attempt to create a Europe in Australia.

Indeed, that is the tragedy of Australia. There is no governing class with its roots in the country. The dominant aim of the rich is to retire and to settle in England. Until that happy time arrives they spend their surplus income on visits to England, often as frequently as every third year. The result is that Sydney society, even if it does interest itself in anything less ephemeral than racing and cricket, only talks about the last trip to England or the plans for the next.

It was not always so. In the years before motor-cars and the phenomenal prosperity that came with the leap in wheat and wool prices during the war, there was a harder and simpler mode of life. One sees it in the bookshelves in the sheep-stations. There are Kinglake and Ruskin and Dickens, and bound volumes of the *Methodist Recorder*—no doubt once well thumbed by the light of an oil lamp when the day's work was over. The library has not been added to since. The motor-car has annihilated distance, and, except in the remote parts, the cinema and the dance-hall are within the reach of all.

The change has had an enormous effect on Sydney. From being a fair-sized port and a colonial capital it has become a huge metropolis. It has been rebuilt, like a city in the Middle West, on boundless faith and optimism.

The great Sydney bridge that was nearing completion was the symbol. The contract for its construction had been made at a time when prosperity appeared fathomless. Wool seemed like steel shares on Wall Street before the slump. It was only necessary to go on expanding the holding and one just sat back and took the profits. There was no limit to Australian prosperity. Of course, Sydney must have a bridge worthy of its new place in the sun. The old method of crossing the water by ferry, which had done well enough in the past,

would not suit the gay, inconsequent future. So the mighty bridge was decided upon. Messrs. Dorman Long were commissioned. The material, forged in the blast furnaces of the English industrial north, was transported across the ocean, and Sydney watched with natural pride the growth of a new architectural wonder of the world. Slowly it towered above the city—impressive witness to Australia's ever-expanding hopes.

Before it was completed it was too late. The prosperity that had brought it into being had vanished. There was neither the money to pay for it nor the traffic to justify it.

Australians, of course, like everyone else, were supremely confident that the collapse in prices was only a passing phase. Something of this sort had happened before. Soon it would pass, and all would be as before.

Will it? Just as England is no longer the workshop of the world, Australia is no longer its wheatfield. Every country is now determined to make its wheat production pay, as someone said of Mr. Lloyd George's farm at Churt, "whatever the cost." It is the same with wool. Then there has been a revolution in economic wants. New methods of heating have come, and mankind has not the need for the same amount of food and clothes as once it had. I doubt, if there were complete Free Trade throughout the world, whether capacity for consumption would equal the capacity for production.

There were signs outside Sydney of a return to the old simplicity. On a week-end visit I was met at the station, not by a saloon car, but by a gig. To one of my generation it was a thrilling experience to be whirled along behind a fast trotting horse. I had not realised what a glorious sensation of speed our fathers must have had at eight miles an hour. In Goulburn, a neighbouring market town, six new blacksmiths opened business that Australian spring. At the time when the earth was gushing out oil at a greater pace than ever before, Australia was returning to the horse.

It was Australia's way of recognising the necessity, at a time of bounding production, of tightening her belt.

But there was not much of this in Sydney society itself those lovely spring nights, as in the principal night-club the girls' skirts and the men's tail-coats swirled round a statue of the Lord Buddha which, with extraordinary insensitivity, was the night-club's principal decoration.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GATE-CRASHING THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

**S**YDNEY was the scene of one of my most alarming social misadventures. It was the week of the Randwick races, the apex of Sydney's social season, and I had been bidden to lunch with Sir Philip Game the Governor of New South Wales. I arrived at the viceregal boxes punctually, and, what was more remarkable for me, in the right clothes. The first race was about to begin. I had never heard of any of the horses, but there was one that sounded promising—called Grosvenor. Was I not travelling with Lord Beauchamp—whose wife was the sister of the Duke of Westminster, whose family name was Grosvenor? I felt that I could not go far wrong with it. I did not, and happily went off at the end of the race to collect my winnings. Little did I know that they were so soon to be the beginning of my troubles.

I had some difficulty in finding my bookmaker, and, when I returned, the luncheon hour had arrived. The viceregal boxes were fast emptying of the guests, and I saw that if I was not careful I should be late for the Governor's lunch.

I raced up the steps, murmured my errand to an attendant, and dashed into the luncheon-room just before the arrival of the viceregal party. No one seemed to know who I was, but I am a modest young man, and there did not seem to be any reason why anybody should know. I grew a little uneasy when I found that everybody seemed to have a place marked out for him except me. An awful thought struck me. Could I possibly have mistaken the date?

With perspiration pouring down me I fumbled for my invitation card. No, it was all right: "His Excellency the Governor and Lady Game" had indeed requested my presence "at luncheon at Randwick on Wednesday, October the eighth." Well, there I was. The aide-de-camp,

with a card, was lining up the guests in order down the wall, for presentation to His Excellency. He took no interest in me and I sheepishly took up my place at the bottom of the line. The doors were flung open, and there entered the Governor-General, Lord Somers. I was not unduly perturbed. The Governor-General was on a visit to Sydney, and obviously, I reflected, he would take precedence over the Governor of New South Wales. The *entourage* swept down towards me—the aide-de-camp introducing the guests one by one. I had my bow all ready—from the head and not from the hips, I had carefully learnt, was the prescribed procedure. When they came opposite me there was a blank stare. Who on earth was this? It is the sort of look that a certain Government Whip gives me if ever I cross his path—a mixture of bewilderment and disgust that the cat should have left behind anything quite as revolting as this. I tried to help the unfortunate aide-de-camp by murmuring my name into his ear, and found myself bowing to the Governor-General as “Mr. Burbage.”

Worse followed. We began to take our seats. I peered, a trifle wildly by this time, at the cards on the table. I could not find mine. Soon they had all taken their seats. I felt like the first child out at musical chairs. There was clearly no seat left for me.

For one wild moment I thought that I might pass myself off as a waiter, and be able to make my escape under a pile of plates. But a kindly aide-de-camp, seeing my plight, and murmuring that there was some mistake, found me a seat.

But, the moment I sat down, my agony began all over again, for it was clear that there had been no mistake. For now I had leisure to look round, and found that there was no one I knew. Where were my host and hostess, Sir Philip and Lady Game? Where was the friendly face of Commander Giffard, the Governor's aide-de-camp? Where were the two charming girls whom I was to have sat between, and whose names he had given me? I looked down the table, and saw that my presence had hopelessly upset the numbers.



I had a man on one side of me, and a girl on the other. Somebody changed places with somebody else, but still the sexes were uneven. Try as we could we could not get it right. Then I saw the guests looking at me and whispering enquiringly to their neighbours.

The situation grew worse and worse. I was uneasy at the oyster stage, with the fish I was alarmed, and with the entrée I was panic-stricken.

For by then the ghastly truth had penetrated into my consciousness : there had been two viceregal luncheon-parties, and I had come to the wrong one.

Bidden to luncheon with the Governor, I had lost my way, and was now lunching with the Governor-General. I had cut a lunch with Sir Philip Game and was now gate-crashing Lord Somers. Oh, the horror of that luncheon-party. I dared not look up lest my imposture should be discovered. I believe the people round me talked to me, and I hope I answered them. I cannot remember anything except the terrible thought that throbbed through my head—that the first time I had sat at meat with a Viceroy it was without an invitation.

The next two hours I spent in explanation. I explained to anyone who would listen that I really had been shepherded into the wrong room ; that I had no idea the Governor-General and the Governor were both giving lunches on the same day, at the same hour ; that I had never been to Randwick ; and that, really, I did not behave like that at home.

Even then it might have passed off all right. Everyone was very kind to me. They said it might easily have happened to them. We began to tell each other stories of similar mistakes made by our friends. I almost began to feel a man again.

Then the second disaster happened. I spotted a winner again, and again I went to collect my winnings, and again I found the party disappearing into tea, and again I followed them—and again I found myself at the wrong party. It might have been an accident once to gate-crash a Governor-General, but could any man in his senses do it twice in one

day? Sydney, when the story spread, as stories do in places where everybody knows everybody else, thought not, and though I remained a month longer I never really recovered from it.

I thought at the time that I had plumbed the depths of my social imbecilities. I had not. Three months later I was invited—as every English visitor to Delhi is—to lunch at the Viceroy's house. It was an omnibus lunch-party of at least thirty people. I had only been a few days in India, and I did not understand three words of the language. When the Indian servants, therefore, murmured something into my ear after the meat course, I thought that they were asking me if I would take a sweet. I nodded my head. When I looked up again, I found myself eating cold duck—alone. It was really a Bateman situation—the man who took the second entrée at the Viceroy's table.

## CHAPTER XV

### AUSTRALIA IN CRISIS

**B**UT THERE WAS no doubt that Australia was in the maelstrom of a very serious crisis. I had seen the gathering clouds before I left England ; I had heard the first rumbles of coming thunder in Canada, and now the storm had burst.

There is nothing like a world tour for grasping the essential interdependence of each of the world's component parts. It appeared in the oddest ways. When I left England, midget golf was unknown. I first played it on a deserted waste in Toronto. As the Canadian Pacific rumbled through Canada I saw course after course being constructed from Quebec to Vancouver. When I arrived in Australia, it seemed to be the one industry that was booming, and when, the following summer, I returned to England, the last midget golf course was being dismantled at Charing Cross station—the boom had come and gone.

So it was, in varying degree, with the slump. It had hardly started in England when I left. The first embankments in the shape of heavy unemployment grants for development works, were just being constructed. In Canada the threat was more menacing ; a General Election had been fought on it, and Mr. Bennett was busy building a tariff to the roof ; in Australia the floods were already out ; I arrived in India to find that the storm had burst there, and that Mr. Gandhi was being enormously helped in his no-rent campaign by the fact that, owing to the crash in agricultural prices, the peasants actually could not pay the rent. In England there were still only ominous rumbles, and it was not until the following August that the Labour Government crashed in thunder and lightning that all but produced a cataclysm.

Australia in the autumn of 1930 was in a thoroughly rotten condition.

The appearance of a Riviera resort which some towns, and particularly Sydney, possessed was purely on the surface. There were stark facts which could not be glossed over. Seventeen per cent of the people of Australia were unemployed. Even in the worst days of 1920 the numbers of the unemployed in England had never reached that figure. Whole industrial towns were derelict and deserted. Australia had over-borrowed. The debt of five hundred millions was not wholly due, as politicians and Press so often suggested, to her magnificent response to the Empire's call in the Great War. A substantial part of it had been the result of post-war borrowings for public undertakings. With the money she had built irrigation works, financed land settlements, created a new seat of Government at Canberra—in fact, developed the country. So far as the nature of these undertakings was concerned no objection could be taken. The justification for a loan depends on the ability of the borrower to pay it back. At the time it was lent there seemed every reason to suppose that it was a sound investment. Unfortunately, part of the money had been spent in a way that made it more difficult to pay it back. It went in direct subsidies to undertakings that ought to have paid their way without them. The railways, for instance, were in a ludicrous position. Since 1925 they had lost twenty-five millions. The deficit on the railways of New South Wales that year alone was five millions. Even the airways were only maintained out of the taxpayer's pocket. On Queensland sugar there was a gigantic bounty. Australia was, in fact, the mirror of all the fallacies inherent in the Socialist State. Its socialised industries were being run at a loss, which was made up out of borrowed capital.

They also exhibited the calamitous results of the political pressure on what ought to be purely board-room deliberations. The railways, for instance, were drained of profit by lines that would not and could not pay, and by compulsory wage-rates that were an impossibility successfully to meet. Both were due to the politicians. A member of Parliament could practically get a branch line made in his constituency

at will. He only had to pack a committee and the contract was signed. The result was that the remotest sheep-station was linked up by a railway service. On some of them there was virtually no traffic at all. On one line that was opened while I was there, for the first week the only passengers were the guard and his wife.

The railway wages were regulated by the arbitration courts, who were allowed to take into account only the standard of living of the railwaymen and had to rule out of consideration the capacity to pay of the State which employed them. The grip of the arbitration courts paralysed recovery. Their method of procedure led to an unholy alliance between the trade unions and the employers. A trade union demanded a higher wage, and the arbitration court gave it. The employer then went to the tariff board and demanded an additional tariff to meet the increase in the wage bill. Thus, though the worker thought that he was getting a higher wage out of the employer, he was really paying for it in lower purchasing power. Both the employer and the worker were combining to rob the community, which in the long run turned out to be themselves.

The tariffs had now reached such a height that even their authors were beginning to turn against them. The method of their imposition was farcical. The sole arbiter was the Minister of Customs. It was only necessary to prove to him that it was possible to employ a handful of men in a particular industry and he would obligingly sign the order for any tariff that might be demanded. The import of galvanised iron, for instance, was forbidden altogether. Yet there was only one firm in Australia which made it, and it was an essential of every farm in the country. The huge emergency tariff introduced that April was defeating its own ends. For, though it was keeping out imports, it was also keeping out the revenue from them. The revenue from customs was down by ten millions. The foreign geese had been shut out and the politicians were then uneasily remembering the golden eggs that the horrid birds used to lay.

The whole administration of the Commonwealth revealed

the urgent need of a higher standard of Civil Servant. The Civil Service was recruited from boys of sixteen. There were none of those first-class honours men from the Universities which in England, whatever party is in power, govern the country. Australian Ministers, quite as much as members of the British Cabinet, need trained advisers to help them, and all that they got was half-educated clerks.

The whole foundations were cracking. Australia had overbuilt itself. For the last twenty years it had been increasingly turning its back on its early struggles, and had looked to the towns to save it. There were actually less men and women on the land then than there had been twenty years before. Half the population of the continent lived in three towns. The civilisation was top-heavy, and the crash in wheat and wool prices had exposed the urgent necessity of a domestic underpinning.

It was this that Australia was most unwilling to do. I saw the struggle that was going on in the General Election that was taking place in New South Wales. The Bavin Government had introduced a series of economies not unlike those which subsequently were sponsored by the first National Government. Those achieved, they appealed to the country for their endorsement.

But they were faced by a very different opposition from that which subsequently emerged in England. Mr. Lang was a real Socialist, not like Mr. Henderson, a Liberal posing as one. He did not run away from the programme ; he gloried in it. He did not compromise with the cuts ; he would have none of them. He was not frightened of a crash ; he relished the prospect. It was the first time I have ever seen the Hyde Park orator in effective action as the alternative Government.

He had two great advantages : he could not be held responsible for anything that had taken place during the development of the crisis, and he had a superb recruiting-sergeant in Sir Otto Niemeyer. The last factor was more important than the first.

Sir Otto Niemeyer became a political "punch-ball." He had been sent out on a financial mission from the Bank

of England, at the invitation of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, to examine the situation and make a report. He came ; he saw ; he made his report. The report created a sensation. It stated in bald terms that until Australia balanced its budgets it could not expect any more loans from London. Even more startling to the Australians was his statement that the standard of living was too high. The Australian standard of living is the Ark of the Covenant, and nobody—least of all a visiting Englishman—had ever dared to say rude things about it. The Federal Government, to whom the report was made, decided to publish it, and from that moment Sir Otto Niemeyer became the most hated man in Australia.

In this position Sir Otto appeared to take an almost sadistic relish in rubbing salt into the wounds. He remarked in an interview that he thought that Australians as a whole were not depressed enough about their financial position. The first article of faith of the ordinary Australian is a supreme belief that Australia will win through her difficulties at an early date. Sir Otto went further, and jokingly expressed his sorrow that Australia had won the Ashes, as it would make them too optimistic. Those of us who remembered the frenzied enthusiasm with which the victory at the Oval had been received, and the peculiar insensitiveness of the Australian to that form of humour, gasped. On the night of the last test match in 1930 Sydney was a blaze of light at 5 a.m. Every householder was "listening in" to the Oval.

The situation might have been saved if only Sir Otto Neimeyer had quickly returned home. He had made his report, and there seemed nothing more for him to do. But he pottered about for a few weeks, and then went off to New Zealand. Australia thought that it had seen the last of him, and returned to its domestic politics. But in early October he was back again, and a month later he was still there. The natural imputation of the man-in-the-street was that England, uneasy about her debts, had put the bailiff in.

On his return to Sydney, New South Wales was in the maelstrom of a General Election, and his position was made

more uncomfortable by the tactics of the Nationalists. Their leader, Mr. Bavin, the retiring Premier, most incautiously made Sir Otto Niemeyer's report the basis of his election programme. He freely quoted from this document, and gave the unfortunate impression that he was advocating economy and retrenchment at the dictates of Sir Otto Niemeyer. The policy itself was sufficiently unpopular, but when it became tied to the name of an English banker it became suicidal. The Labour Party were not slow in seizing their chance.

I heard his name greeted with hoots and boos at every Labour meeting. Hideous caricatures of him were emblazoned on banners at every unemployed demonstration. His name lent itself to every kind of preposterous mispronunciation. "England has already lost one Empire because of the tyranny of Downing Street ; let her beware that she does not lose another by reason of the dictation of Threadneedle Street," was Lang's favourite peroration. The audience cheered itself hoarse.

New South Wales went to the polls, and the Nationalists were overwhelmingly defeated. Lang's oratory, and its electoral effect, suggest now an interesting reflection of what might have happened here if the National campaign in England had been badly handled.

But an English election on cuts in social services was not then on the map. Conservative candidates in by-elections were busy "nailing lies to the counter" whenever it was suggested that such a policy was in contemplation. In nine months Great Britain was proceeding down the same dolorous path.



## CHAPTER XVI

### HOUSE FULL

I TREKKED out into the interior to try and discover what opportunities there were in the Australian bush, for immigrants from the English towns. "Australia wants you." So run the posters plastered across the steamship offices in England. Below them stretches out a glorious panorama of rolling sheep-stations and smiling wheatfields. Usually there is a fair-haired young man, muscular and bronzed, beckoning to a shadowy mass by a factory gate to come out and join him. "It is a man's life," he says. It is an invitation that would attract any normal, enterprising, young out-of-work man to try his luck in Australia.

Only when he reaches Australia does he realise how bogus it all is. Perhaps three months on a farm or sheep-station in the rush season, and then he is out of work, and there is no dole, and he is without friends. He has been cruelly deceived. Australia does not want him. It sounds fantastic in a country twenty times the size of Great Britain, and with a seventh of her population. But it is true.

In the first place, Australia is fiercely Protectionist. Organised labour is as anxious to keep out men as it is to keep out goods. The loudest cheer I heard at a political meeting was the one that greeted the statement that Australia could not afford any more immigrants.

It is hard economic necessity that dictates this attitude. Even work on public buildings is suspended. The underground railway in Sydney has been left half finished, just as if in the middle of the operations some terrible calamity had overtaken the city. It seemed, then, the economic madness of a badly governed country. A year later I was to return to England to find the same Bedlam of Economy. The underground railway in Sydney was paralleled by the by-pass road in Oxford. Work had been stopped on it

mid-way towards completion, and thus it remained grass-grown, almost obliterated—a melancholy monument to human folly, like Ruskin's experiment in road-making at Hinksey. The local parks in Sydney had become doss-houses for the unemployed. Down the great main roads there was a dreary procession of men begging their way from sheep-station to sheep-station.

The prospects of work on the land are hardly less gloomy than in the towns. The idea of great open spaces ripe for cultivation is an illusion. Australia is like a saucepan after the soup has been poured out of it. The nourishment only clings to the rim. The centre of Australia is an unpeopled wilderness of scrub and sand. The fertile regions are so relatively narrow that out of a population of six millions only half a million live on the land. The territory is vast, but until the water problem is solved the area of productivity will remain confined largely to the sea coast. A few years ago it was discovered by the scientist that wheat could be grown on a yearly rainfall of nine inches. Immediately, bold pioneers swooped down on the western districts, and thousands of new acres came under cultivation.

From first to last there was a desperate struggle with the drought, and now the collapse of the world wheat prices has brought all this splendid energy and enterprise to ruin. The farm, as much as the factory, is swelling the numbers of the unemployed. Emigrants who escaped from the dingy life of the town to the land of promise are back in it now.

I have met Englishmen, tramping the roads, who have never had a month's consecutive wages the whole three years they have been out there. It was particularly pathetic in the region of the gold-fields. I would meet young men, not three years out of Manchester, returning from digging operations. Proudly they would show me a tiny tobacco tin with the contents of a fortnight's work—with a few flakes of dust which they were certain was a deposit of gold. If they had been, they could not have been worth a day's wage. Family emigration to the wet area of Western Australia has produced satisfactory results only to the extent of twenty per

cent of the settlers. The English artisan from the industrial districts does not take readily to the crude lonely precarious life of the farm. Hitherto he has only known the discipline of the factory, and he neither likes nor wants his new responsibilities. Frequently it is found that in a few months he has escaped back to the over-crowded, but homely and colourful, life of the towns.

There is a dark side even to the carefully thought out schemes of boy migration. In their early years the boys are very welcome on the land. They are willing, and they are cheap. But the time comes when they grow to be men and demand men's wages. That is too often the moment when their master thinks it is time to get a fresh batch of cheap labour, and turns them off.

The life of a farm-boy in Australia may, if not properly supervised, be as blind-alley an occupation as that of a golf-caddy at home.

Careful supervision is needed even of the more elaborate schemes for the emigration of public-school boys. The greatest care is needed to ensure that they are not sweated by the farmers to whom they are apprenticed, and given no real training in agriculture at all. A father of one of these boys was passing through Sydney on one of these world tours, and had arranged to meet his son, who was on a sheep-station in the back blocks. He asked the boy, when he arrived, how many days holiday he had got. "I have left," said his son. "You see, I could not get any leave at all, so I gave notice." This particular boy had been on the station fifteen months without a day's holiday.

No doubt, with the return of prosperity, new opportunities will open up. But for the next few years the problem of Australia must be to absorb the Englishmen she already has rather than to devise means for taking more of them.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A CITY MADE TO ORDER

**T**HE VISITOR who arrives at the railway station of Canberra by night, and sees from his carriage window a scene upon a plain of flashing lights, imagines that he is entering a huge metropolis. It is only when he hears the bleating of sheep from his hotel window the next morning that he realises that he is still in the Australian bush.

The lights that he has seen come, not for the most part from houses, but from desolate fields. They are there, not to mark out the city as it is, but as it will be in fifty years' time.

Canberra, as the capital city of the Commonwealth, has hardly begun. The Parliament House, opened seven years ago by the Duke and Duchess of York, is a temporary structure set down on a mountain plateau. The "Albert Hall" will no doubt one day be the centre of swirling traffic, but at present it stands isolated on a desert of scrub and rock. The General Post Office and the shopping centre will one day be linked together by fine boulevards, but at the moment they are separated by two miles of grazing land. Constitution Avenue will in time deserve its name; at present it is a country lane leading to the church.

The parish church is the quaintest sight of all. It was built, early in the last century, by convict labour, and for generations the only worshippers there were the Campbell family, who owned the local sheep-station. Now each Sunday it is packed to the doors with the great of the earth. In a hundred years no doubt it will be completely hemmed in by streets and shops.

Canberra, in places, is no more than the ground plan of a city. Opposite the Parliament House there will one day stand out in glittering white the Capitol, but at present its site is only marked by a foundation-stone; the hill behind

will in time bear a great war memorial ; at present it is only the feeding-ground of sheep.

Yet Canberra, though it looks to-day rather like the beginnings of a Wembley in the mountains, is organised as if it were already a teeming city. Everywhere there are one-way traffic notices, though there is often not a vehicle in sight. To reach my hotel in my car I had to pursue a merry-go-round as involved as that of Piccadilly Circus, though the intertwining roads were as deserted as on a Yorkshire moor.

It is here that the unfortunate Governor-General will for the future be doomed to live. It places him right outside the main current of Australian life. So it does the politicians. They are hundreds of miles from the electors who sent them. It is almost impossible for deputations to wait upon them, or for any echo of the outside world to be heard on those sun-baked wastes. Even the national newspapers do not arrive until late in the evening.

What is the reason for this self-conscious and uncomfortable isolation ? The project of a capital city took place after federation more than thirty years ago. The conflicting claims of Melbourne and Sydney were being debated, and the idea of a new city half-way between them emerged as the only possible compromise. There was also the argument that the farther away the seat of Government is the more efficient and impartial is that Government likely to be. So Australia set out to turn a rocky sheep-station into her Washington. It is difficult not to admire her faith and courage.

The enterprise has been dogged by ill fortune. The war interrupted it, and the slump brought it to a standstill. Offices and shops that came into existence on the expectation of a population that would immediately rise to thirty or forty thousand are catering only for a quarter of that number.

The transfer of Civil Servants has been so extraordinarily slow that, even when I was there, while a quarter of the Civil Servants were in Canberra, the remaining three-quarters were in Melbourne.

There was even a movement on foot to induce the Federal Parliament to cut its losses and scrap the whole project. But in Canberra itself there were no croakers. I can well understand the fascination to the Civil Servants of a place where it is possible to walk straight out of a Government office into the lonely loveliness of the Australian bush. The citizens have faith to battle through.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A VERY LONELY MAN

**T**HERE are few more tragic sights than the eclipse of great public figures. The war produced an abundant crop. There is Mr. John Burns, once the militant leader of aggressive trade unionism and the first working man to enter the Cabinet. He resigned on the outbreak of war, and has never appeared since on a political platform. But often in the post-war years did he wistfully stage in his imagination a great come-back. "They will be seeing the red light soon, Bernays," he has said to me, referring to the trade unions, "and they will be calling for Old John." But they never did, and it is too late now. There was Joe Devlin, the Rupert of debate even in the Irish Party, living on into the days when the Irish Party had gone, and the causes for which it had struggled had been won, and reduced to fighting the old battles in the smoking-room of the National Liberal Club, because there was nothing left to fight for on the floor of the House of Commons. On the grand scale there was Mr. Asquith. I know no scene in modern biography more infinitely pathetic than that picture of the old man, after his defeat at Paisley, quoting those lines, "Like an Arab, old and blind, whom some caravan has left behind . . ."

In the Parliament House at Canberra, on the Opposition side, there can be seen in a dim corner seat, if the visitor is lucky, a little man, old and grey-haired but with the indefinable air of one who has exercised supreme authority. He seldom visits the House, and even more rarely speaks, but he is the one man of whom every Canberra tourist longs most to catch a glimpse. For he is none other than W. M. Hughes, the wartime Prime Minister.

Probably with the exception of Mr. Lloyd George, no politician in any country exercised a more absolute authority than did Mr. Hughes in Australia from 1914 to 1918. Though the war found him the first Labour Prime Minister, it was he who sent that first thrilling message to the British Cabinet that Australia would rally in her tens of thousands to our help. Heart and soul he threw himself into the task of organising victory. Did his old friends in the Labour Party oppose him on the issue of conscription, then he threw them over, split the party from top to bottom, and created such confusion that it was out of office for thirteen years.

He journeyed to England to take his seat in the Imperial War Cabinet, and immediately his name blazed into prominence. On the walls of the lobby of the Parliament House to-day there is a framed picture of the famous Low cartoon which recalls the extraordinary position he made for himself. In it Mr. Hughes is depicted at the end of the Cabinet table in Downing Street, shouting and gesticulating, while Mr. Lloyd George and the rest of the Cabinet cower in terror by the door.

There was even a movement, led by Lord Northcliffe, to persuade the English Labour Party to take him as their leader. But Mr. Hughes declined the prospective crown, and returned in 1918 to receive for his Government a vote of confidence as overwhelming as the coalition in England.

To-day he is the loneliest figure in Australian public life. He quarrelled with Mr. Bruce in 1922, and is now an object of fear and dislike to the Nationalist Party, of which he was the founder and creator. The breach with the Labour Party has widened, and he is even further at variance with his old Labour friends. He has tried to form the Australian Party as a political force, independent of both the other parties, but, though it numbered in 1930 two followers, before the year was out desertion reduced it by fifty per cent, and now it is dead.

At Canberra he speaks from what is equivalent in the House of Commons to the corner seat below the gangway on the Opposition side of the House, the eyrie of all distinguished



independents, and scatters his gibes and insults impartially at all his opponents. But his speeches, whether in the country or in Parliament, count for nothing, and the newspapers, ever quick to sense popular feeling, have ceased to report them. Whenever his name is mentioned, in public or in private, it is always with a sneer. The great war hero has sunk almost into a music-hall joke.

His constituency of North Sydney alone remains faithful to him, and will secure for him a return ticket to Canberra as long as he likes to avail himself of it.

It is a tragic eclipse, for Mr. Hughes is still in the middle sixties, and has, though his deafness has somewhat increased, all his old abilities and buoyancy. In conversation he has some of the magnetism of Mr. Lloyd George, and his judgments on men and affairs, though occasionally cruel, are always shrewd and often very witty. I went out to supper with him in Sydney, and the moment he started talking the curtain went up on the tumultuous scene of Downing Street in time of war. I sat enthralled while he lit up one exciting episode after another with anecdote and mimicry, and occasionally a positively Churchillian piece of word-painting. There on the walls were the evidences of his former greatness—signed photographs of the King and Queen, intimate presents from the Prince of Wales, and keys in gold and silver presented by half the great corporations of Britain.

A week later I saw the contrast. I was with him on the platform at an election meeting. He had boldly plunged into the New South Wales elections. It was an attempt to carry his idea of an Australian Party from federal politics into State politics. He was surrounded by the rag-tag and bob-tail of the political platform, the sort of men who enrol under the standard of any stunt party in England, who would not get even adopted for the orthodox parties. The hall was packed, but by men who had come to jeer. Mr. Hughes spoke well. There were passages of oratory that gave a glimpse of what a spellbinder he must have been. Then came questions. Mr. Hughes was too deaf to hear them

aright. Perhaps it was a mercy, for they were neither complimentary nor relevant. Whatever his message for the crisis, New South Wales was determined not to hear it. "He has had his show ; let him give someone else a chance." That was the comment I heard as we stumbled out of the hall at the end of the meeting. In the Press the next morning there was not a line of his speech reported. "And there was a time when the Press stumbled over itself to lick my boots," was Mr. Hughes's wry comment. The voice of the people in the long run may be just, but it is very merciless.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE STORM BURSTS OVER LONDON

I HAD NOW BEEN in Australia three months. My scanty resources were almost exhausted. I was living, if not from hand to mouth, from week to week on my contributions, casual and ill paid, to the Australian Press. I determined to move on to India. I had been given a hundred pounds for half a dozen prospective articles for the *News Chronicle*. My hope was that out of that would emerge something more lucrative and more permanent. But by the time I landed at Cape Comorin I had precisely fifty pounds. It was not a great sum on which to take a sub-continent by storm.

But the gamble triumphantly came off. I happened to arrive at the moment when the delegates were returning from the first Round Table Conference. All eyes were on India, and for the next three months its problems and its peoples were front page news in the London papers as never before. There was the civil disobedience movement, then at the most bitter and formidable period of its existence ; the Irwin-Gandhi conversations that culminated in the Delhi Pact ; the meeting of the Indian Congress at Karachi ; the arrival of Lord Willingdon. Each day produced its new turn of events and at least a four-hundred-word telegram from "our special correspondent," as I soon became.

For I realised, a few days after my landing, that now was my chance, and, recklessly pouring out my remaining rupees, I dashed about the country getting interviews, recording impressions, forecasting events. A series of lucky introductions took me behind the scenes both in the Gandhi Ashram and Viceroy's House. I sent my cables out into the blue. There was no response from London. I did not even know whether they were being used, still less whether they were being regarded as useful. I had attempted a cable from Australia about the situation there some weeks before, but

had received the rather cold answer the next morning : "Thanks, but don't cable further unless we ask." Might I not get something of the same kind again? It was an anxious time, for I had now nothing left but the return half of my round-the-world ticket.

Then one blessed morning I received the following telegram from my editor :

"Accept somewhat belated congratulations your excellent work hope you remaining there until situation clears do you require funds. CLARKE."

I joyfully telegraphed for fifty pounds and went and bought a new pair of shoes. Thereafter it was all song and dance. I have already recorded my experiences of the India of those exciting days in *Naked Fakir : a Study of Gandhi*. Suffice it to say that, so far as material things were concerned, my luck had completely changed, and that when I returned to England five months later it was to a permanent contract on the *News Chronicle* at a salary rather more than twice the figure that I had been receiving when I had left the paper ten months before. Life is a "chancey business."

I arrived back in the summer of 1931 to find England in the maelstrom of a crisis far more serious than anything I had witnessed in my travels. The cry for economy had resulted in the appointment of the May Committee. The Government thought that it had shelved the problem in the way that all Governments down the ages have done, and dispersed for the summer recess. The committee reported that there would be a deficit of a hundred and seventy millions in the current Budget, and recommended the most drastic cuts to meet it. The Cabinet was summoned back to London to grapple with the situation. Something had to be done, and that quickly. But what? The Cabinet was in almost continuous session. The leaders of the other parties were sent for. Would they co-operate in the passing of the necessary cuts? Mr. Baldwin came back from Aix-les-Bains. The answer was "Yes," and the Cabinet went back to its

deliberations as to what those cuts should be. Mr. Baldwin returned to Aix-les-Bains. But the Cabinet produced nothing. As the days went by, it was clear that there was a complete cleavage.

In the meantime the economic situation took a sudden turn for the worse. Confidence began to ebb away. The withdrawal of short-term loans from London, that had been a trickle, developed into the dimensions of a torrent. It was known that seventeen million in gold had been withdrawn in one week. The demand grew to such an extent that four million in gold was withdrawn in one day. The position became desperate. Still Ministers argued and quarrelled behind the double doors of the Cabinet room. They could not agree. Then it was known that only the ten per cent unemployment cut was in the way of a settlement.

I remember that night very vividly in my newspaper office. Usually the most sensational news is received inside the Fleet Street offices with an air of bored efficiency. But that night all was bustle and anxiety. For the only time in eight years of life in Fleet Street I saw the rooms where the tape machines are placed filled with excited and expectant men. The fate of the Government might be decided at any moment. Even the machines that usually chatter out in one continuous stream their inconsequential news from the ends of the earth were silent. Then one of them gave a premonitory cough, and slowly sputtered out the news that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald had left Downing Street by the garden entrance and was on his way to Buckingham Palace. Then we knew that the fight was over, and with it the second Labour Government. Ramsay MacDonald had clearly gone to offer his resignation.

It is time that the part that the King played in the formation of the first National Government its right proportion. There are dark hints of an undue influence—indeed, that he of his non-party position. No man who makes these criticisms has so far made any attempt to substantiate them. Like Sir Stafford Cripps, they ring the King's front-door bell in the manner of naughty boys, and then

What did the King actually do? Mr. Ramsay MacDonald informed him that he could not carry his Cabinet on the question of the cuts, and that he must resign. Thereupon the King invited him to see if it were not possible to head a coalition of parties that would make themselves responsible for the economies. Mr. MacDonald was reluctant. The King pressed him. Likewise he pressed the leaders of the other Parties to take office under him. Receiving promise of support both from Mr. Baldwin and Sir Herbert Samuel, Mr. MacDonald consented to carry on as Prime Minister, and the National Government was formed. The King took leave of his late Ministers in the ordinary way when they came to Buckingham Palace to deliver up their seals of office, and thanked them for their services to the State. Where is the basis for criticism in all this? The King seems to have behaved throughout with complete constitutional propriety.

I saw the drama of those days in the London house of Mr. Lloyd George in Addison Road. A cruel fate had struck him down in the moment of his greatest chance of "a come-back" since the Carlton Club meeting in 1922 revolted from his Premiership. He was just emerging from a critical operation. It was obvious that he could take no office in the new Government, even if he desired to do so. But he has a constitutional inability to keep out of any struggle. From his sick-bed he gathered his returning strength to direct operations, and from those efforts resulted the last and most serious of all splits in the Liberal Party, and with it ended one of the main guarantees that the new Government would be National in fact as well as in name.

He began by insisting on a complete control of all the names of the Liberal members who were to be submitted for inclusion in the Government. That meant that nobody would be recommended who had not on all critical occasions obeyed the crack of the Party Whip. For some months there had been a growing divergence of opinion on the wisdom of the Liberal Party keeping the Labour Government in office. On a critical division at a party meeting, seventeen out of the fifty-five had defied Mr. Lloyd George's appeal. Now

seemed a heaven-sent opportunity for healing the breach. Mr. Lloyd George flatly refused to accept it. Every one of the seventeen was ruled out of consideration. They included men like Leslie Hore-Belisha, Geoffrey Shakespeare, and Ernest Brown, who have all since been outstanding successes in the minor posts of the present Government. But, far more serious than anything else, Sir John Simon, a pre-war Cabinet Minister and perhaps the ablest man, judged by dialectical standards, in any party, was excluded. It was understandable. Sir John had defied Mr. Lloyd George. He had spoken against the party ; on one occasion he had even gone to the limits of acting as teller in a critical division in which the Liberal Party were voting in the opposite Lobby. But it was a time for magnanimity. His exclusion was to cost the party dear in the weeks that followed.

For no sooner was the National Government formed than there was a demand by the Conservative Party for a General Election on the "National Ticket." To defeat that move, Mr. Lloyd George mustered every ounce of a sick man's strength. He guessed what would be the result—a staggering Conservative victory and the end of Free Trade. The Liberal Ministers in the Cabinet were instructed that at all costs they must resist a General Election.

But the demand in the House of Commons grew more insistent. The Conservatives saw a supreme chance of a victory staggering in its magnitude, and it was not in Conservatives lightly to let it pass. In their efforts to secure a dissolution they were suddenly presented with new and unexpected Liberal allies. The dissentient Liberals who had been left out of the Government swung against their old colleagues. Mr. Hore-Belisha began collecting signatures of Liberal members who would promise unconditional support to the Prime Minister, even including, if it was necessary, a programme of tariffs. He secured a score of Liberal signatures. They all had their reward. Not one of them was opposed by a Conservative at the election. From that moment an election was inevitable.

Sir Herbert Samuel was in a hopeless position in the

Cabinet. He clearly no longer spoke for the whole Liberal Party in his fight against an election. He was severely handicapped in his fight for what was called a formula which would preserve the essentials of Free Trade, for a third of his own party had declared for Protection. Lord Reading, the Liberal Foreign Secretary, was known to be wavering on the election issue. He argued, very rightly, that Liberals could not possibly stand out to the point of a split on the principle of no appeal to the electors.

So an election was decided upon. Mr. Lloyd George was livid. "A pair of plucked boobies" was what he called Sir Herbert Samuel and Sir Archibald Sinclair when they went down to Churt to tell him that the fight was over. He withdrew his limited support of the Government, and Major Gwilym Lloyd George resigned his Parliamentary Secretaryship of the Board of Trade. The Liberal Party went to the country split into three, and the country was robbed of a vital balancing element against the hordes of Conservatives who would be swept in on the cry of "The Nation in Danger." I believe that it would never have happened if Sir John Simon had been included in the first National Government. There would have been no Simonites without Simon. Instead, there would have been a hundred Free Trade Liberals wheeling together, and the course of this Government would have been very different.

Looking back on it all now, it is impossible to say that the demand for an election was wrong. The Government had a working majority of barely sixty. They were faced with an Opposition, noisy, intolerant, intensely bitter, continuously shouting, "You are afraid to go to the country; go and ask the electors what they think about these cuts." I saw a good deal of the House those few weeks from the Press Gallery. The clamour was almost continuous.

The strange thing was that Labour had no inkling of what awaited it at the hands of the electors. I talked to many Labour members at the time. They knew that they would lose seats, but they were convinced that they would come back at least one hundred and fifty strong. I remember a Labour



member from the Durham area saying to me that he was against an election, but adding, "Not, of course, that it makes any difference to me—my majority is fourteen thousand." Three weeks passed, and he was out by three thousand.

I remember very vividly my last glimpse of that extraordinary House of Commons. Philip Snowden was winding up for the Government in a House that all day long had been in an uproar. It was the end of his speech, up to now rendered almost inaudible by the ferocity of the interruptions. Suddenly he turned on his tormentors. He chose Dr. Hugh Dalton<sup>1</sup> for castigation.

"The Hon. Member for Bishop Auckland," he hissed, "says he wants a General Election. He does not want it more earnestly than I do." There were mocking cries: "You are not standing; it is all very well for you to say that." Snowden stood there, drawn, haggard, but every feature expressing biting contempt. He waited for the shouts to die away. Then he continued: "I have noticed this during the last two or three days that I have been sitting here, being able for the first time in this House to see the faces of my old associates. I have admired the way they have cheered to keep their spirits up, and I have admired those who have done that, knowing——" And there was an outbreak of concentrated fury. Snowden did not move a muscle. "Knowing," he repeated—and went on repeating it until the clamour died down—"that only a few weeks possibly remain before the place that knows them now will know them no more." Hansard laconically describes the scene that followed, "Interruption." The noise in fact was like the baying of wild beasts.

I saw the same House of Commons six weeks later—this time not from the gallery but from the floor. All that remained of those two hundred and eighty Labour members who had occupied once the whole of one side of the House of Commons were fifty-one, most of them bald and grey-haired, a dispirited group huddled on two benches. Snowden had spoken more truly perhaps than even he knew.

<sup>1</sup> Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs in the Labour Government.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE GANDHI FLOP

WHILE the political situation was working up for a General Election, I flew on the instructions of my paper to Marseilles to meet Mr. Gandhi, who was arriving for the second Round Table Conference.

It was on a cold wet September morning that I stood on the landing-stage at the docks watching the *Viceroy of India* nosing her way into the harbour. There was Mr. Gandhi, looking down from the rails of the second-class deck, with Mrs. Naidu by his side—the picture of dejection. In a few minutes the special correspondents had tumbled on board, and Mr. Gandhi was being impelled to his cabin by a swarming, shouting polyglot mass of hard-boiled reporters. Those in front shouted, “Back,” and those behind shouted, “Forward,” and poor Mr. Gandhi did his best to answer the questions of the nearest to him. The men at the back, who could not hear, yelled out, “Don’t you believe in fair play, Mr. Gandhi?” To which Mr. Gandhi replied, “I believe in fair play for everyone except journalists.”

So, in this strange atmosphere of bustle and badinage, Mr. Gandhi set foot in Europe. It was a bewildering contrast to when I had last seen him—so impassive, so wise, so regal, surrounded by adoring disciples on his verandah in Old Delhi. Here he seemed more like a Hollywood comic star than a mahatma. When my turn came to be received by him in his squalid little cabin, I caught the prevailing infection of irresponsibility, and, instead of cross-examining him about the programme that he would put before the Conference, I found myself asking rather silly questions about whether he would visit King George if he were asked, and if he proposed to make any additions to his wardrobe as a protection against a raw autumn in London.

Outside I found a Danish woman journalist in tears. She

had come all the way to get an interview with Mr. Gandhi, and as her only foreign language was French, and neither Mr. Gandhi nor any of his *entourage* could speak any other European language but English, her interview had been lamentably unsuccessful. Summoning to my aid the remnants of my schoolboy French, I managed to piece something together for her to send to her newspaper.

Then I ran into Miss Slade. We had not got on well together in India. She thought that I did not treat Mr. Gandhi with sufficient reverence. It is the curse of my Liberal convictions that I am an object of dislike to both extremes in any controversy. I am suspected by the Tories as being a dangerous Radical, and despised by the Radicals as being a timid Tory. I made another effort to establish friendly relations with Miss Slade. "I expect," I ventured, "you are very much looking forward to being home again after all these years." The remark was not a success. "I am neither glad nor sorry," she answered. "It is all in the day's work."

Altogether it was a depressing morning, and when finally I escorted Mr. Gandhi, through pools of rain-water which splashed up his bare legs, to his first-class carriage in the Paris *train de luxe*, I had a presentiment that the visit would prove a fiasco. So it proved. From the start, Mr. Gandhi got into the wrong hands. Mr. Jayakar and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the wisest of the Round Table councillors, motored down to Folkestone in order to put him in immediate touch with the progress of the Conference. But he was spirited off to the Friends' House in the Euston Road, where he was given a rapturous welcome by an assembly of men and women of the type who are never tired of boasting that they are "on the Left." As Mr. Wells rather cruelly observed of this type, "They always must be in the van in politics; they do not mind where the van is going as long as they are in it."

The first opportunity for getting to grips with the Indian problem was afforded the next day, which was a Sunday, by a dinner-party, which was given by Sapru, at the Dorchester. Lord Sankey was there, then at the height of his prestige as an authority on India, and the Prime Minister looked in for

a few minutes to pay his respects. At nine o'clock, Sapru arranged that the other guests should go to an adjoining room, and Gandhi was left on a sofa, with Sankey on one side and the Pandit Malaviya, the leading Congress man, on the other.

The idea was that, left alone, they would really get down to essentials. Lord Sankey was then far from well, and his usual bedtime was 10 p.m. But that night he stayed up, and it was not until 12.15 that Jayakar and Sapru interrupted to see how far the discussions had proceeded. They found poor Sankey in a fever of exasperation. During those three and a quarter hours Mr. Gandhi had concentrated the talk on two questions only—first whether English rule in India in the last 150 years had been beneficial or not, and secondly whether non-resistance was justifiable as a political weapon. It is not surprising that Sankey's subsequent verdict on Gandhi was that he was "religiously an obscurantist, politically vague, easy to manage."

Mr. Gandhi then disappeared into the East End, where he was the guest of Miss Muriel Lester at Kingsley Hall, Bow. Her house was besieged by reporters night and day, for Gandhi, in his early days, was first-class copy. There was much unwise publicity, which included a visit to Gandhi from Charlie Chaplin. They had their talk in the presence of twelve camera-men, and Mr. Chaplin subsequently attended Mr. Gandhi's evening prayers.

All these junketings were taking place when Mr. Gandhi ought to have been either refreshing himself after the labours of the day, or reading papers in preparation for the labours of the morrow. The result was that Mr. Gandhi was always tired. I remember interviewing him at St. James's Palace a few days after his arrival. He was dictating something to me when his pencil suddenly scrawled over the paper, and I looked up to find him fast asleep. In London he was always a tired man. His routine of life, reasonable enough in the steamy heat of Ahmedabad, was quite unsuitable for a raw English autumn. Mr. Gandhi, in London, never had sufficient sleep. Very often he would not be in bed until 1.30 in

the morning, and then, according to his inviolable rule, he would be roused at 3 a.m. for an hour's prayer, and even after that he would refuse to sleep later than 5 a.m.

So it went on all through the Conference. When it was not in session, he would neither rest nor would he attend to business. He was the despair of his fellow delegates. He could not be persuaded to keep himself free for conferences. He would attend fruitarian lunches, and be at home at all times of the day to every crank and faddist in London. Week-ends were spent with deans and dons. Mr. Gandhi was at his happiest over a disputation on the nature of the Deity. But more often he would be persuaded to make some pronouncement about India.

Then the cat would be among the pigeons. For Mr. Gandhi, used to the adoration of the Ashram, had no instinct for, or knowledge of, the precise language expected from the leading delegate at an important conference. He would make statements that created consternation among his friends, and then would emphatically deny them the next day.

On one terrible occasion, at Oxford, he declared that he would accept provincial autonomy as an instalment of responsible self-government at the centre. The British Government delegates were delighted, for that was what they had been pressing upon the Indian delegates and had so far met with an uncompromising refusal. The Indian Liberals were thunderstruck when they were informed of what Mr. Gandhi had said. At first they refused to believe it. The Prime Minister told them that "he had especial reasons for knowing that the report was entirely accurate."

Apparently there was, in the room in which Mr. Gandhi had spoken, some kind of microphone. Poor Mr. Gandhi, faced with his own words and the anger of his friends, was forced to say that, though he made the declaration, he did not hold to it. The episode was hardly calculated to increase his prestige.

He seemed to lose his sense of dignity. He made repeated requests for an interview with Mr. Winston Churchill,

though Mr. Churchill had made it quite clear that he would not see him. In spite of that he gave a ridiculous interview to young Randolph Churchill.

His observations in council were unhelpful in the extreme. Once, when his fellow delegates were pressing for a larger membership for the new assembly which was to be established in Delhi, he remarked, "All my life I have distrusted large assemblies of people." "Do you oppose, then," he was asked, "an increase in the membership of the new assembly in Delhi?" "Oh, no," he answered. "I just hate crowds." It is very difficult to do business with a man who talks like that.

He felt a sudden loneliness. Where were all those cheering millions that he had left behind him in India? He must have more representatives of Congress. As a matter of actual fact it was entirely by his own choice that he had come alone. The Viceroy had pressed upon him the importance of taking with him, for instance, a delegation of Nationalist Moslems. He was ready to concede as many as twenty. But Mr. Gandhi was adamant. He could come alone. He would demonstrate to Great Britain that, as far as Congress was concerned, there was no Hindu or Moslem question. He would in himself embody a people struggling to be free.

But in the Conference Chamber of St. James's Palace the situation did not seem so easy as that. He found himself faced with a formidable array of Communal Moslems, who claimed to represent the overwhelming majority of the Moslem faith. What could he produce to disprove their claim? He went back on all his old assertions, and now demanded to have a delegation of Nationalist Moslems by his side. It was gravely proposed that the Conference should be held up four weeks while they made their way across the ocean.

Mr. Gandhi was quick to detect any slights. From the first he thought that Mr. MacDonald was not paying him sufficient attention. Indeed one of the disasters of the Conference was the failure of Mr. Gandhi and Mr. MacDonald to make any real contact with one another. Perhaps it is that they are too like one another to be tolerant of each other's faults. Both are inordinately sensitive to their own dignity, and

both, on occasions, are almost equally vague and rhetorical in their language. At any rate, whatever the reason, Mr. Gandhi did not like Mr. MacDonald, and when Mr. MacDonald referred, in his closing speech, to "My dear Mahatma," the implied affection was far from genuine. Perhaps it was that Mr. MacDonald was something of a mahatma himself, and there cannot be two mahatmas on the same stage.

Mr. Gandhi's only real success was with Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India. He felt that he knew where he was with him. Sir Samuel's success in his most difficult office has been that he has never tried to conciliate extremists. Both with Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Churchill he has been frank and straightforward. He has told them, with almost brutal directness, that their demands were impossible of fulfilment. Mr. Churchill chafes at opposition, but Mr. Gandhi relishes it. There is something of the masochist about the Mahatma. He always likes those who have put him into prison, or have the power to do so. It is not without significance that his two greatest friends in the Empire are General Smuts and Lord Irwin, both of whom sent him to gaol. In the same way, although he has spent a large portion of Lord Willingdon's vice-royalty in captivity, Gandhi has a real affection for him. He recently spun a bed-quilt, and sent it from Yeravda Gaol as a gift to the Viceroy.

As the Conference continued, Mr. Gandhi faded more and more out of the picture. When finally, at the end of December, he set off for home with his odd *entourage*, his departure was relegated by the newspapers to the back pages. The last that England heard of him was a blistering interview that he gave to the editor of a Rome paper, which, the moment the first protest reached him, he immediately denied. So he was true to type to the end.

The visit to Europe was a dismal failure. Yet it would be foolish in the extreme to regard Mr. Gandhi as now of no consequence. He failed to impress Great Britain, but he retains the imagination of the Indian masses. His loin-cloth and his shawl are still, to millions who cannot read or write,

the symbol of something outside themselves. To the Indian youth not yet captured by the more fanatical and far more revolutionary outlook of Pundit Jawaharalal Nehru, his personality is a call to adventure and sacrifice. As Mr. Jayakar said to me just before he left for India last December, "The trouble is that you can only rouse interest in India if you propose to do something spectacular. I could get a meeting of ten thousand people if, on landing in India in a fortnight's time, I proposed to lie in front of Government House, Bombay, until *swaraj* was granted. As it is, I shall find great difficulty in getting even a hundred of the leading people in India to meet me and think out amendments to the White Paper."

In justice to Mr. Gandhi it must be admitted that his strength is not merely in the fact that he is a good spectacle, but that he is a genuine saint. Unlike the rich young ruler he has not turned away sorrowful. He really has sold all that he has and given to the poor. "There is nothing that the fellow wants." If he has not united India, he has gone as near to it as any man since the advent of the raj. Great Britain has not heard the last of him.

All the same, so far as his trip to England is concerned, of which so much was hoped, it would have been better if he had digested the bitter lesson of President Wilson in 1919, and stayed at home.



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE NATIONAL SWEEP

**A** FORTNIGHT before the election I was adopted as National Liberal candidate for North Bristol.

I am frequently asked by my friends what was my connection with North Bristol that led to my invitation to represent it in Parliament. I had none. When I visited it for the first time there was not a man or woman I knew from one end of the constituency to the other.

But that is not an unusual experience in English politics. Probably not fifty per cent of the members of Parliament sit for the constituency in which they had previous connection. There are obvious objections to the carpet-bagger, but it would be very difficult for Parliament to function as the council of the nation without him. Particularly is this true of the boroughs. In the agricultural areas it is not difficult to find candidates among the retired Civil Servants or local bigwigs with the necessary leisure, inclination, and ability to represent their fellow citizens. In the towns it is far more difficult to find such men. Take Glasgow, where there are fifteen seats to be scrambled for by the three parties. It would be extremely difficult locally to find forty or fifty men with the necessary desire and qualifications for a parliamentary candidature. It is not easy in most towns to get the right type of man to serve on the town council. When it comes to a Parliament sitting, perhaps two hundred miles away, the task becomes even more formidable.

The carpet-bagger performs a further useful function. Inevitably he emphasises the important tradition of our political system that a man is a member for the nation first, and his constituency a long way afterwards.

My campaign began under most inauspicious circumstances. At the last election there had been two Liberal candidates, and the split was still an open wound. The

Labour Party had the advantage of having in Mr. Walter Ayles not merely a local man, but a man who was fighting to hold the seat he had won at the last election. He was a conscientious objector during the war, with all that means in courage and burning sincerity. In addition, I was not alone in my championship of the National Government. There was a Conservative candidate in the field, and he had been there for two years.

My one chance was to show as clearly as I could that, come what may, I intended to fight them all, and, if the Conservative candidate did not withdraw, there would be a real danger of delivering over the seat to the Socialists on a split National Government vote.

I met my committee at 3.30 p.m., and agreed to stand subject to the approval of the executive ; by 5 p.m. the news " Liberal Bombshell " was placarded on the posters of the Bristol evening papers, and by 8 p.m. I was holding my first meeting. I shall not easily forget it. Pandemonium reigned. I was assailed on all fronts by the Socialists—who disliked my policy and welcomed my presence, as it helped the chances of their own candidate—and by the Conservatives, who had no rooted objection to my policy but hated my presence, for it endangered the chances of their own candidate.

Amid the uproar my voice could faintly be heard proclaiming that a National Government, to be National, could not be just Conservative, and that if the National appeal was to be really genuine in Bristol, room must be found for at least one Liberal candidate in the five constituencies. " That night I was unfurling my banner, and I intended to carry it aloft to Westminster." It is extraordinary how, the more peace-loving one is, the more militaristic one becomes in one's metaphors on the platform.

I must confess that the next morning I had an attack of cold feet. The local papers announced the first meeting of my Conservative opponent. On his platform there appeared to have gathered half the Liberal leaders of Bristol. A late Liberal member for the constituency was proclaiming that

he would "work like a nigger" for my Conservative opponent. However, my own meeting was described as noisy but crowded, and that morning discussions were opened with a view to the withdrawal of the Conservative candidate.

As a follower of Sir Herbert Samuel my position was distinctly unaccommodating. I would support emergency import regulations but I would not swallow a permanent tariff to get rid of Conservative opposition. The Conservative candidate appeared willing to withdraw, but his executive would not let him do so, and it was announced at the end of the day that there would be no withdrawal and that the Conservatives would fight on to victory.

So hostilities began again, and there seemed some likelihood that they would be extended. The Liberals in South Bristol, who had been quiescent, began to look for a candidate, and there was a rumour that there might be, after all, a candidate in East Bristol, the stronghold of Sir Stafford Cripps. Bristol seemed likely to become, in spite of all the appeals for unity, the arena of a party conflict on old-fashioned lines. Negotiations were opened up again, and this time my opponent, Major Jephson, with great public spirit and self-sacrifice, defied his executive and withdrew his candidature.

So far as I was concerned the battle was really over. With a straight fight, victory was assured.

One electoral battle is very like another, and I would not dwell on this one were it not typical of the fights which were going on in all the other boroughs of England. It was a strange election. We are not likely in our times to see another like it.

I do not suppose that any great party has ever had to fight at such an appalling disadvantage as the Labour Party at the last election. Sir Oswald Mosley perhaps summed it up best in a meeting he addressed early that month in Trafalgar Square, with the beautiful and devoted Lady Cynthia seated behind him on one of the lions.

"For years the Labour Party," he said, "has been saying that the capitalist system was breaking down. Now it has broken down. What has the Labour Party done? It has run away. It is as if the Salvation Army took to its heels on the day of judgment."

The Labour Party had no appeal beyond the unemployed, and, in the most foolish possible way, it tried to enlarge the scope of that appeal by suggesting the possibilities of even greater unemployment in the future. Thus my Labour opponent issued an election poster: "Vote Labour. You may be unemployed yourself one day."

I replied that if the word "and" was inserted after "Labour" I should agree with it. It was money for jam.

An attempt was made to concentrate fire on the "cuts," but the moment that the ex-Labour Ministers began to divulge the secrets of the Cabinet the attack was dispersed in the utmost confusion. It was obviously no use creating a song and dance about the "cuts" when it could be proved that those who were trying to do so had previously agreed in the Cabinet to nine-tenths of them. Philip Snowden's two broadcast addresses were the most devastating pieces of electioneering since Asquith smashed up "the raging, tearing campaign" of Joe Chamberlain on tariffs a generation before.

The power of the broadcast was manifested in a more striking degree than in any other election. While we candidates were addressing, in cold and dark schoolrooms, audiences numbered by the score, our leaders were addressing over the ether our constituents in thousands as they sat by their firesides. It was a fact the importance of which has never been sufficiently realised. We worried over a rowdy meeting in a remote schoolroom where it had been difficult to get any sort of hearing, quite forgetting that, for every elector who was prevented by the rowdies from hearing our case, ten more were listening to it over the wireless, put with far more cogency by the chief spokesmen of our party. In the struggle to preserve democracy, the wireless, if properly employed, is of incalculable assistance. It enables anyone

who can afford a wireless licence to hear the issues of an election stated by the men and women most qualified to state them. It has restored to a minimum the danger of one side successfully resorting to violence to prevent the other from being heard.

Another enormous factor in the sweeping triumphs of the National Government was the undoubted threat to monetary stability. I am too young to remember the Chinese Labour election of 1906, when Mr. Lloyd George was able to say, "Chinese labour in the Welsh hills—God forgive me for the suggestion." But that cry must have been a damp squib compared to the electric effect of "Your pound in danger." The most complete nit-wit in politics could go through the motions of brandishing a ten-shilling note on the platform, recalling the calamitous consequences of the collapse of the mark in Germany. Indeed, for a small consideration, an enterprising agent supplied candidates, by post, with specimen million-mark notes for electioneering purposes. The device had also the merit of being based on fact. If the Budget had not balanced, or if, as was more likely, it was thought that the Budget could not be balanced, the decline in purchasing-power would have had a calamitous effect on wages.

Admittedly the danger was exploited, but not with marked unfairness until the savings bank ramp was launched. For that there was little excuse. The suggestion that the balances in the savings banks had been put by the Labour Government to an improper use went against the elementary decencies of electioneering. I did not hear about it until my first eve-of-the-poll meeting. In an election my chief mental pabulum is the *Daily Herald*. I read it assiduously, for then I know what questions I shall be asked at my meeting that day. This meeting, when I reached it, was so patently out of hand that I said that I would begin by answering questions. There was a bombardment from all parts of the room of the usual stock Socialist posers. Then a young working-man asked me if it was true that the Labour Government had used the Post Office savings to meet the deficit in the

unemployment fund, I replied that I had not seen the report and that I knew nothing about it, but that if the Budget was not balanced, not merely wages, but savings would decline in value. There was a significant silence when the young man shouted in reply, "Well I shan't vote for Labour." It was clear the savings bank was to be another Zinovieff letter. Still, I do not think that the savings bank story had much effect on the result. Labour was doomed to disaster from the start. I never contemplated the reduction of their numbers in the House to less than fifty, but it is on record that I said that they would not return more than a hundred strong.

Socialists had only themselves to blame for the catastrophe. For years they had been working to convert English politics into a struggle between the "Haves" and the "Have Nots." At last they had succeeded, and what they had been repeatedly warned against had come to pass. The "Haves" outnumbered the "Have Nots" by millions. When the capitalist system was in danger the unemployed came to its rescue. As Mr. Churchill said a few weeks later "The unemployed men went into the polling-booths to vote away the coppers of their dole. It was sublime."

The results were certainly staggering. As I crossed the hotel lobby *en route* for the count the first result was arriving. Hornsey had remained faithful to Captain Euan Wallace by 33,000. There was great cheering when I passed the offices of the *Evening World*. Ben Tillett was out by 11,000 in Salford. I knew that Salford in previous years had proved a good weathercock. As my sister and I drove on to the count I increased the estimates of my majority from 5,000 to 8,000. It was actually 13,000.

Looking back on it all now, I wonder, not that the Labour Party returned less than fifty members, but with every conceivable obstacle in their path they polled  $6\frac{1}{2}$  million votes.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE NEW BOY AT SCHOOL

NEXT TO WINNING a scholarship at Oxford, I have experienced nothing that gives more exquisite pleasure than the few days after one's election to Parliament.

To open the sheafs of congratulatory telegrams, to find M.P. emblazoned after one's name on envelopes, to wake up in the morning and remember that one is now a member of the same club as Winston and L. G., to know that for the next four or five years one will have a front seat to watch the drama of politics, are delights that die hard at twenty-nine. I realised, of course, that I myself had had no part in my victory. In such a contest the Archangel Gabriel, if he had been the Labour candidate, would have had no chance. A Guy Fawkes dummy, if he had been labelled National Candidate, would have been triumphantly elected. My ten thousand votes in the Rugby election two and a half years before were infinitely more to my credit, though they spelt defeat, than my twenty-seven thousand votes now, though they opened the doors of the House of Commons. But these thoughts, though salutary, in no way impaired my feeling that for the moment the world was a very pleasant place to live in.

Happily for my sense of values this mood of fatuous contentment did not survive my first day at work. "In a few hours you will either be an M.P. or a nonentity," whispered a supporter on the day of the election. The first day of Parliament, I realised that it was possible to be both.

There were so many of us, and they were all so much more assured, so much better groomed, so infinitely more intelligent than myself. It was, in fact, just like one's first day as a new boy at a public school.

I began by being asked my name by the attendants, and I stammered and blushed quite as much as I had done

fifteen years before. A kindly policeman covered up my confusion by showing me where I might leave my hat and coat. There was my peg, labelled with my name, just like a school changing-room.

I stumbled up the stairs to the Members' Lobby, and found it as crowded and excited as the house-room used to be on the first day of term. All of them were boasting of their majorities in their constituencies, as they used to brag of their exploits in the holidays. In face of their stupendous victories, my own contribution seemed very meagre. What an extraordinary young crowd they were. Everybody seemed to have been at school with everybody else. In actual fact over a sixth of the House had been educated at Eton ; over forty members had been at Harrow. There had been nothing like it since the election of 1900. The " Governing Class " were once more governing.

With quite a number of them I had crossed swords on the floor of the Oxford Union. As Conservatives and Liberals, we had looked forward, in happy contemplation, to the time when we should hurl defiance at one another across the floor of the House of Commons. Now, by the irony of life, we had been borne in together on the same tidal wave to support a Labour Prime Minister.

The gap made by " the lost generation " was sadly in evidence. The under-thirty-fives actually out-numbered the over-forties. For better or for worse, the post-war generation, ill fed and ill taught in a world rocking and shaking in the convulsions of a great war, had come into its own to put things right.

Still chattering, we poured into the chamber. Wedged between two Conservatives, I watched the fascinating scene. What an astounding transformation has taken place ! It might have been the fruits of a Nazi election in Germany, so uniform was the vast majority of Government supporters ; young, clean shaven, well groomed, and well trained in their parliamentary uniforms of short black coats and striped trousers, they look as like one another as a row of Chinese. The Conservatives are everywhere. They flood over all the



benches on the Opposition side below the gangway. They occupy more than half the seats opposite the Government front bench itself. Only two benches of Labour members, and, on the Government side, two benches of Liberals have survived the deluge. My companions cannot believe that I am not one of their party, and point out to me, as if they were queer specimens from another age, Sir Herbert Samuel and Sir Archibald Sinclair.

The schoolboy atmosphere is still there. "Jimmy" Thomas, with his hand to his mouth, shouts a cheery greeting to Mr. Lansbury, the Leader of the Opposition. It is comforting for the new boy to know that even the prefects are human.

There is even a joke that we can all share. It is Jack Jones making a state entry, pausing to bow ceremoniously to a Speaker who is not there, hesitating as to whether he should sit on the front Opposition bench, and finally, with a great deal of clatter, finding his old seat on the back bench under the gallery.

It is all, to a new member, one long thrill—the walk down the corridor to the House of Lords, where we are told, in language strangely reminiscent of the Old Bailey at a murder trial, to repair to the place whence we had come "and there to choose a proper person to be our Speaker"; the oddly characteristic speech of Major Courtauld, the Tory mover of the motion for the election of the Speaker, in which he commended Captain Fitzroy because "he was a good judge of shorthorns"; the uproarious speech of Will Thorne, Labour member for West Ham since the beginning of the Labour Party, who disclaims any feeling of diffidence in leading the Speaker to the chair in view of the fact that he has "already led four wives to the altar"; the pretence of resistance made by the Speaker, when they come to lead him from his seat on the floor of the House to the Speaker's chair, dating from the time when to be Speaker of the House of Commons was almost certain to involve conflict with the King, and men were so reluctant to accept office that they used to be carried, shouting and screaming, to the chair as if it were the scaffold. It is all the greatest excitement, even

to the full-throated cheer that we give to the Prime Minister, who had led us to victory, when he rises to congratulate the Speaker on his instalment.

But as the members trooped out again I was suddenly brought up against the inevitable tragedy of public life. There in the corner of the Members' Lobby was Mr. Arthur Greenwood, talking to one of the policemen. He was no longer of our number. He had lost his seat for Nelson and Colne. From being Minister of Health he had joined that melancholy fraternity of ex-members of Parliament.

With Mr. Greenwood it was not for long. Within a few months he was back again, as Labour member for Wakefield. But of the ex-Ministers who were hounded out of their constituencies in 1931 only he and Mr. Henderson, two and a half years afterwards, have been given the opportunity to return. For some of them, defeat meant the end. I remember Dr. Macnamara, who had been in Parliament a quarter of a century, saying to me, after his defeat in North Camberwell in 1924, "You can survive defeat in the thirties and forties of your life, but, when you get into the fifties and sixties, the time factor enters in. If I fail again, I am done for." He did, twice, and now he is dead. I regarded the presence of Mr. Greenwood that afternoon as a grim and valuable warning of the changes and chances of parliamentary life.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ROUGH WATERS

**B**UT THOUGH the opponents of the National Government were few, it was very soon clear that they would be formidable.

Indeed it became manifest in the first debate of the new Parliament. I well remember the scene. The triumph of the National Government seemed at its flood-tide. Supporters of the Prime Minister, flushed and excited, occupied every corner of the House. The official Labour Opposition looked as if there was not much fight left in them. Mr. Lansbury did his best to give a vigorous lead, but in such an atmosphere, and after such a catastrophe, it was an impossible task. Members of the Government sat back in blissful contemplation of their triumph, and of the fact that they would be spared for the next five years any serious criticism.

Then the speaker called Maxton. He spoke from the front bench below the gangway on the Opposition side of the House, amid a cohort of die-hard Conservatives which included General Page-Croft and the elegant and ill-fated Edward Marjoribanks. His position of isolation from the main body of the Labour Party was carefully calculated. Indeed he had stayed up all night in order to secure it. It was to show that, with organised society as at present constituted, he would make no compromise. Coquetting with the Means Test and the cuts had brought official Labour to disaster ; he would have none of them. So he began his speech without any of the comforts of a preliminary cheer. Indeed he had only three followers in the House—Mr. Kirkwood,<sup>1</sup> Mr. McGovern, and Mr. Buchanan—all, like himself, from Clydeside constituencies. Every man's hand was against him, and he was out to show that his hand was against every man.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Kirkwood has since returned to the official Labour Party.

It was not a promising beginning in the face of a vast majority already showing the inevitable signs of insolence and intolerance. But as he developed his theme of the terrible conditions of the Glasgow slums in general, and, in particular, the harsh administration of the Means Test already beginning to break up family life, it was clear that he was making a deep impression. A young member, standing at the Bar of the House, tried to interrupt. While Mr. Lansbury had been speaking there had been a good deal of contemptuous heckling, which had put Mr. Lansbury off his stride. Mr. Maxton would have none of it. He was on the interrupter in a flash, like a terrier after a rat : " When the Hon. Member has been a little longer in this House, he will know that it is out of order to interrupt from below the Bar." There was silence, and from that moment there were no more interruptions. It was not a great speech. I have heard Mr. Maxton to better effect a score of times since. But it brought a House, elected in a wave of popular passion, right up against the realities of what they called in the nineteenth-century times—" The condition of England question "—and for not a few of the 200 new members it was for the first time. With his jet-black hair, his dark fanatical eyes, his drawn features, his untidy clothes, Mr. Maxton always looks the embodiment of revolution down the ages. On that occasion he seemed to be the symbol of the wrath to come if we abused our mandate.

Many politicians think Mr. Maxton harmless because he is kindly. He is certainly one of the most charming men in the House. He is the soul of courtesy in debate ; he can keep the House up all night, and remain, at the end, on as friendly terms with his fellow members as he was at the beginning. But he is formidable for all that. Mirabeau said of Robespierre : " He believes what he says ; such men are dangerous." That is true of Maxton. He is passionately sincere. Society, that has bought so many revolutionaries, will never buy him. No flattering attentions from pretty women, nor invitations to lunch or week-end parties, will ever tempt him from his course of ruthless opposition to the existing

order. He will never accept invitations to dine with his fellow members. He had been very helpful to Dingle Foot and myself as new members, and, rather nervously, we approached the great man to ask him if he would dine with us one evening. In the kindest possible way he declined. "We never dine with other members," he replied, speaking for his Clydeside friends as well. "It does not do, a cup of coffee one evening, certainly, but not dinner."

Of course he is right from his own point of view. We stood for a way of life which in his opinion was a sin against the light. He believes that nothing good can come out of capitalist society. "Away with it; why cumbereth it the earth?" You cannot denounce capitalism and at the same time eat and drink with those who support it, or, if you do, you will never destroy capitalism. What has weakened the morale of the Labour movement is, as the Labour member in Mr. Shaw's play *On the Rocks* puts it, "the humbug of the Labour leaders . . . the popping in and out of Buckingham Palace . . ."

Maxton cannot be bought. As he proved that first afternoon of the debate on the address of thanks "for the Gracious Speech from the Throne," such men are dangerous.

Before the debate had finished, the Government had another shock to its complacency. This time it was Mr. Churchill. Rising from the corner seat below the gangway on the Government side of the House, within a few feet of the Prime Minister, he proclaimed a policy of "perfect independence," and defined his attitude to the Government as one of "discriminating benevolence." He had not uttered more than a few sentences before it became crystal clear that his attitude in this Parliament would be more "discriminating" than "benevolent," and before he sat down a potential Opposition leader had appeared far more deadly than any that Labour might throw up, for he came from the ranks of the Conservative Party, who represented almost five-sixths of the voting strength of the House of Commons.

Mr. Churchill reminded the Government that he had

separated himself from Mr. Baldwin in the last Parliament on the question of India—"On the question of holding out hopes of Dominion status to India, and responsible government at the centre, and generally the policy of the Gandhi-Irwin pact." "I made my differences public," he added, "and they still continue." It was a declaration of war, and from that moment there was launched what Mr. Churchill has himself since defined as "a long and bitter fight."

Since that opening speech, Mr. Churchill has made, in the opinion of shrewd observers, great tactical mistakes. He ought to have spoken seldom, and then only on India. He ought to have been content, in general, only to obey a three-line whip, and then to have given, except on Indian questions, unswerving support to the Government. He ought to have concentrated his efforts on winning the confidence and affection of the more responsible among the younger Conservatives. He has done the exact opposite. He has spoken frequently on a variety of subjects, and almost invariably in a manner hostile to the Government. He has made little attempt to understand the mind and temper of the House. Indeed he has shown himself rather intolerant of youth—either not staying to hear their speeches, or, if he does, attempting to destroy their effect by a fusillade of objections and interruptions. Thus in spite of a series of orations, as dazzling dialectically as they were damaging to the Government, he has not increased his following.

But there was no doubt that afternoon that in Mr. Churchill the Government had one of its most formidable propositions. It was not, as it had been thought, "a Ministry of all the talents," but, as Mr. Churchill impishly described it, "a Ministry of nearly all the talents." One of the talents—and that not the least important—had been left out.

When the House met again after the Christmas recess, a third opponent outside the official Opposition had emerged to harass the Government. This time he came from the Government front bench itself. At the end of January 1932, the Government policy for the conversion of Free Trade England into a Tariff country emerged in concrete shape in

the Cabinet. Sir Herbert Samuel and his two Liberal colleagues, Sir Archibald Sinclair and Sir Donald Maclean, promptly resigned. They were begged to reconsider their decision. They did so, and the phrase "agreement to differ" entered the language of English politics. It was the culmination of a struggle that had begun the moment that the second National Government was formed after the General Election. The election had been fought on the basis that, as Mr. Baldwin stated, "the issue was not Protection, it was not Free Trade." There was to be no general Tariff without an impartial enquiry. But the day that 470 Conservatives were elected, the battle of Free Trade was lost. Sir Herbert Samuel put up a courageous fight. A compromise might have been reached on a flat rate of a ten per cent import duty. It could be agreed that it was imposed with the twin purpose of a revenue duty, and a warning to foreign countries of what would be the result of their intransigence in the question of Tariff reductions. But on top of this wall there were placed the bricks of what were called "the additional duties."

With those, no Free Trader could compromise. Had Sir Herbert Samuel been able to command the full Liberal vote, it is probable that he would have secured the scrapping of the second proposal. But Sir John Simon and Mr. Runciman went over to the enemy without firing a shot. Even then an agreement might have been reached, for Mr. Baldwin, with his acute sense of political realities, had grasped the importance of retaining, if it were at all possible, the Radical vote. But there was Lord Hailsham. He was for the whole hog. In a struggle between Lord Hailsham and Mr. Baldwin, not for the first time in the history of this Cabinet, Lord Hailsham won.

So the Import Duties Bill was introduced, and the House was treated to the extraordinary spectacle of the Home Secretary opposing the main feature of the Government's programme from the Government front bench. His speech was a restatement of the classic case for Free Trade. For many of the members, it was the first occasion that they had ever heard it, and they listened fascinated, almost enthralled.

Indeed I was solemnly rebuked for breaking into cheers while Sir Herbert was speaking. In company with Mr. Mal-lalieu, I had taken up my position on the parliamentary private secretaries' bench immediately behind Sir Herbert, in order to give some appearance of support from immediately behind him. At appropriate moments we broke into enthusiastic "Hear Hears." Then a charming old man in the seat behind leaned forward and whispered, "You boys, I would not barrack Samuel. He is doing his best under very difficult conditions."

But when Sir Herbert Samuel sat down it was not merely the Tariff policy of the National Government that had been damaged but the National Government itself. He had shown himself to be too great a parliamentarian to be harmless as an opponent. The speech was too good to be forgiven. The latent dislike against the Samuelites flamed up into active hostility, and though the partnership in the Government continued for another six months it was already doomed. Even harmless Liberal back-benchers, when they intervened in the debate, were exhorted "to go over to the Opposition, where you really belong"; and when Mr. Isaac Foot spoke on the third reading, he was assailed by Lord Winterton with a ferocity hardly equalled since he had assisted in the shouting down of Mr. Asquith twenty years before.

So, before three months were out, the National Government was being assailed from three different quarters besides the front Opposition bench—from the dissentient Conservatives under Mr. Churchill, from the dissentient Liberals under Sir Herbert Samuel, and the dissentient Socialists under Mr. Maxton. Whatever its course, the new Parliament was not destined to be dull.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE TENDERFOOT AT WESTMINSTER

“**I WANT,**” said Burke when canvassing the electors of Bristol in the long, calm days of the eighteenth century, “to have my share in resisting evil and doing good.” It was not difficult then. The vast majority of the members of Parliament never spoke at all. A young man might fail to impress, but if he was sufficiently ambitious there was no lack of opportunity. It is very different now. There are 615 members of Parliament, and 614 of them are desired by their constituents to make their contributions. There is only one man who is expected to keep silent, and he, by the strange irony of nomenclature, is called the Speaker.

The first task of a new member of Parliament is to make his maiden speech. He is not really received into the comradeship of the assembly until he has done this. It is the political equivalent of what I believe “blooding” is in the hunting field.

Before I became a member of Parliament I used to think that it was a naïve affectation for politicians to dread their maiden speeches. After all, no man or woman can hope to be elected without probably a hundred speeches in an election campaign. He will have faced every kind of audience, from a women’s meeting to a Chamber of Commerce dinner. He will have performed at a street-corner to a gathering that began with a stray cat and his agent, and he will have addressed mass meetings, running into thousands, at the town hall ; he will have spoken to audiences wholly with him and audiences wholly against him, and, what is worse, audiences superbly indifferent. A Liberal candidate is in the worst position of all. He has not merely to brave the almost hysterical animosity of a certain class of Socialist women, but the insolent hostility of the militant section of the upper middle classes. In the Rugby election I found

it far more difficult to bear the cold dislike of squirearchy in the villages than the knock-about heckling of the Rugby street-corners. I would be having quite a pleasant meeting on the village green when down would come the house-party from the mansion. With a great deal of clatter they would walk straight between myself and the audience, and, taking up a position well away from the agricultural labourers, would keep up a running fire amongst themselves of contemptuous comment. Then would come questions. A bull-necked gentleman farmer would ask, "Do you not think that your unemployment plans for making roads will seriously interfere with the hunting?" I would laboriously try and make some kind of reasoned reply, but, after two or three sentences, they would be chattering to themselves as merrily as ever. Or some hard-faced girl would ask, apropos of some answer I had given to a question on local option, "Do you propose, then, to chuck the pubs?" I not merely saw red, but felt like going red. I expect that my supporters on occasions were equally trying to Captain Margesson. The partisanship of an election tends to bring out the worst in all of us.

After that a maiden speech in a knowledgeable House, free from all interruptions, did not seem difficult. I was soon undeceived. There is nothing more terrifying than the ordeal of a maiden speech. I would give one warning to intending candidates for Parliament. Do not be too glib in your promises, with reference to the late member's infrequent speeches, that "at any rate when I am elected I will not be a silent member." It is very difficult to be anything else. A twenty-minutes' maiden speech is a week's work. A member has to select a subject, first, that he knows something about; and secondly, that is likely to be discussed in the near future. Then he has to read up all the relevant documents. It is no good now bringing out those easy generalisations that won such a round of applause in the election at that schoolroom in Station Road. Detailed knowledge and expert criticism are required in the House of Commons. The speech slowly takes shape, every word written out: "Mr. Speaker, I must

ask the indulgence accorded to all maiden speakers in this House . . ." He pauses, and crosses out " asks " and inserts " crave." It is well to get a little originality into the first sentence.

The speech finished, it is tried out before a few friends one by one. They listen enthralled, giving a very good imitation of a laugh when they think there is a joke (usually when none was intended), and one and all agree (for they are good friends), when the rehearsal is over, that the speech in its own peculiar way is a little masterpiece.

A friendly Whip is then taken into the secret. Will there be any chance of " getting in "—the member knows the school slang now—on the Indian debate? The Chief Whip is consulted. He is kindly but dubious. " A lot of our fellows," he says, " want to speak that day " (they always do), " but I will mention it to the Speaker. You won't be long, will you? It is a great mistake; ten minutes or a quarter of an hour at the outside." The member grows hot all over. At the last rehearsal the masterpiece had taken thirty-three minutes to deliver. New counsellors arrive in the person of old parliamentary hands. They tell him that the Whips are " No earthly; you had better go and see the Speaker yourself." He would, of course, sooner drop in for morning coffee at 10 Downing Street than go and chat to the Speaker, an Arnold-like headmaster, so remote and awful in wig and gown under his canopied chair.

The great day arrives, and the Whips inform him that, though the Speaker can make no promises, he will do his best, and that with any luck he should be " up " by six o'clock. The morning is spent in an agony of rehearsal of his speech, now complete with the brilliant impromptus and the unexpected asides. It has already had such a chorus of praise that, greatly daring, he inserts a sentence three-quarters of the way through—" But I fear, Mr. Speaker, that I have already detained the House too long "—hoping for those encouraging shouts of " Go on " that greet the great masters of debate.

He comes down to the House hours before the debate is

due to begin. Questions seem endless. At last the Minister responsible is on his feet. He remains on them for fifty-five minutes. He is followed by the Leader of the Opposition, who occupies three-quarters of an hour. He is succeeded by one of those discarded Ministers who, from their eyries below the gangway, appear to spend their enforced leisure in compressing the case for the Government and the case for the Opposition into one speech. He speaks for an hour and ten minutes. The debate began at four o'clock. It is now about a quarter to seven and the discussion is just thrown open to the back benchers. The new member has had no tea, for he dare not miss a sentence of the debate. In an agony of nerves, he sits reading and re-reading his notes.

At the end of each speech he jumps up, hoping against hope that he will at last be called. Half past seven comes, and his family, for whom he has got tickets in the ladies' gallery, are turned out to make room for the ticket-holders for the evening sitting. Still the debate drips on. The dinner-hour comes. Every point in his speech that had seemed so novel and so logical when he had rehearsed it in the morning has long since been taken and worried into lifelessness by other speakers. He has had no food since breakfast, for he has been much too nervous to have any lunch and he dare not leave the House for any refreshments lest the Speaker might think that he has abandoned his intention to speak and cross him off his list. Besides, by that time he is much too nervous to swallow.

At this, the deadeast hour of the whole parliamentary day, the Speaker—or, rather, the deputy Speaker, for by this time the Speaker is probably having his dinner too—murmurs, "Mr. Erasmus." Mr. Erasmus remains on his feet, the other fifteen intending speakers miserably subside, and the great moment has come. A Lloyd George or a Churchill could not make a sensation under such circumstances. What chance has Mr. Erasmus? He is weak with anxiety and lack of nourishment, and most of his audience are only anxious that he should give way to them with the least possible delay. Small wonder that he blunders and stutters, and hesitates and trails

away into incoherency. The final humiliation comes next day, when with fluttering fingers he opens the national newspapers to see what is being said about him, and finds that his speech has either been ignored altogether, or—almost worse!—is dismissed with the announcement that “Mr. Erasmus, Slacton North, Con. N., supported the motion.” Mr. Erasmus then goes away to recuperate in the country. But his reward comes in his constituency. Here his speech is valued at its true worth. It is given a headline—“Slacton North M.P. Supports Government Policy. Striking Speech in Last Night’s Debate”—and his constituents have the comfortable feeling that but for their member the Government would have been in a pretty bad way the night before. Then there is always his family. They were driven from the gallery before he spoke, so he sends them a Hansard copy, and they appreciate his remarks at their true worth. They are delighted: “My dear, that Hansard gave you such a long report, and that the member who followed said such nice things about you.” They do not know—and he does not tell them—that Hansard is a verbatim report, and that the congratulations are merely the formality prescribed by custom, like referring to a member with military rank as “gallant” and a lawyer member as “learned.”

My own maiden speech was a terrible effort. I had chosen the subject of India. Mr. Churchill had strolled into the House in an absent-minded way and sat in front muttering disagreement—not realising that it was a maiden speech, which it is the custom not to interrupt—and, after five minutes of it, he could bear no more and strolled out again. I had the additional difficulty of a stammer to negotiate, and had most incautiously chosen to refer several times to “Bombay business men.” It had been all right in rehearsal, but “on the night” they proved as difficult to articulate as is “the British Constitution” to those in the throes of another misfortune.

To some members their first speech is also their last. They cannot face the tiresome business again. For the second speech is probably more difficult to deliver. Then the member

is deprived of "most favoured nation" treatment given to a maiden effort, and has to take his chance on his own merits. The less industrious or the less ambitious either relapse into permanent silence or confine themselves to pertinacious inquisitiveness at question time. Many start in the race for parliamentary honours, but there is a perceptible thinning out after the first hurdle.

The House of Commons is a primitive expression of the primæval law of the survival of the fittest. No man reaches high office without having first passed through the testing fire of back-bench intervention. That is why the House of Commons is such a wonderful leveller. Fashionable "silks" whose fees exceed ten thousand a year, owners of offices as big as the British Museum, publicists whose weekly comments on men and affairs are read by millions, if they are rash enough to test their strength in the House of Commons, all endure the same weary process of initiation. Their reputation outside counts for nothing. Until they have made their mark in the Chamber itself they are of no more account to their fellow members than an obscure Inner Temple lawyer or a dim trade union secretary.

There are other pitfalls. Indeed, there are rules of conduct as puzzling and as unalterable as public-school traditions. In the first week a new member standing at the end of the Chamber put half his foot on the strip of brass that guards the actual entrance to the House. Immediately there were loud cries from all parts of the House of "Bar!" "Bar!" and the unfortunate young man is quickly informed that the strip of brass is holy ground. It is technically part of the House, and no man can stand in the House. There is the mystery of the three-line whip. Each day a notice is sent to a member informing him of the business to be transacted. It ends with the words: "Your attendance is requested." If it is underlined once it means, "I should not come unless you feel inclined." If it is underlined twice it means, "You had better come along if you can." If it is underlined three times it is tantamount to saying, "No excuse will be taken." To disobey a three-line whip is like cutting compulsory

cricket. There is even the obligation to leave the House by a certain door. In front of it the Government Whips stand. Their job is to see that the Government always has a majority, and to do that they use every art of abuse and cajolery, according to the status of the member, to persuade him to remain. There is a natural temptation to evade them by sneaking out of a side door, but it is regarded as just rather shabby.

I myself, in the first month, was guilty of an atrocious breach of etiquette. I was shyly sitting on the bench directly behind the Ministers when a note was passed to me addressed to one of the Ministers. It seemed quicker to hand it to him direct, so I leaned over, tapped the great man on the shoulder and handed him the note. It was a terrible offence. Notes to Ministers are handed to them by their parliamentary private secretaries. Apparently it is as unthinkable for an unknown private member to approach a Cabinet Minister as it is for a private in the Army to speak to his commanding officer without doing it through a non-commissioned officer. I did not make the position any better by my stammering confession that I did not know in actual fact who was the great man's parliamentary private secretary. For days I went hot all over when I thought of my offence.

The question naturally arises, How long will it last? Parliament to-day has not a good Press; a politician is the stock joke of the music-halls. There is a great deal of unconscious but nevertheless powerful Fascist propaganda in all this. Having seen some of the Continental Parliaments, I can only record that the British House of Commons has very few of the faults that have brought them to ruin.

It is a tolerant assembly. There is an extraordinary feeling of comradeship in it all. I was involved some months ago in a public controversy that concerned my position in the House of Commons and my position as a journalist outside. When it was at its height I rose to speak, to be greeted by cheers from all parts of the House. It was the House of Commons' way of expressing their sympathy with one of their number involved by his parliamentary attitude in a

difficult situation. This sense of fellowship as members of the same organisation communicates itself to every party. I recall in this connection Major Nathan's "crossing of the floor." I can see him now laughing with the Government Chief Whip at the Bar of the House and then taking his new seat on the Opposition side amid cheers from all parts of the House.

There is the sort of House of Commons joke that has a peculiar tang in it that I have caught nowhere else. I will give just two examples.

It is the time when there is a great deal of public discussion about the Liberals performing that evolution known as "crossing the floor." The Minister of Transport is being heckled at question time about the inadequacy of the protection afforded to pedestrians. "Could there not be more notices saying, 'Please cross here?'" A Labour member rises to put a supplementary, "Will the Minister consider the erection of such a notice in this House by the seat of the Right Hon. Gentleman the member for Darwen [Sir Herbert Samuel]?"

On another occasion the more extreme Tories were heckling the Minister for Foreign Affairs on the subject of those countries which had not paid their subscription to the League of Nations. They included China, which was then being badly mauled by Japan. Mr. Maxton sees his opportunity. "But, Mr. Speaker," he asks with portentous solemnity, "is it allowed for a Nation who has not paid its subscription to the League of Nations to go to war?"

Small incidents, but significant of the temper of the House of Commons. I have known scenes which in Continental Parliaments would have led to a duel, or at least a free fight, dissolve by some timely quip into laughter. There seem all the portents of a storm, and then it merely ends in summer lightning.

The House of Commons is also as incorruptible as any human institution can be. Scandals do not occur. One reason, of course, is that there is not the opportunity for them. A member of Parliament has nothing in his gift.



He cannot even influence the appointment of so much as a sub-postmaster in his constituency. He cannot even sit on the committee that decides anything that deals exclusively, or even especially, with his constituency. What member of any other deliberative assembly is able to say, when he is lobbied for a tariff for an industry in his constituency, as the British member of Parliament does, "I have no power; you must make your application to the Tariff Advisory Committee"?

It deprives Fascism of its greatest argument—the corruptibility of representative institutions. There is also this further obstacle to the growing Fascist movement. Under the Constitution the Fascists themselves have first to be elected to Parliament before they can destroy it. When they are elected, I do not believe that they will be so anxious to destroy it.

Something of the same sort happened in New South Wales in the first Lang Government. Mr. Lang secured election of a group of Socialists to the Upper House with a view to voting for its abolition. But, when they were once nominated, some of them lost their enthusiasm for destruction, and, when the fateful division came, they made it their business to be absent, and the Senate in New South Wales survives to this day.

To-day, if a safe seat falls vacant there are two score of applicants for the reversion. Men and women who have been members of the House of Commons seldom lose their desire to become members again. Perhaps that is the finest memorial that any popular institution could possess. I am certain that it is an important factor in its permanence.

## CHAPTER XXV

### APPENDICITIS AND MR. BALDWIN

I REALISED how much I was enjoying the House of Commons when, visiting my brother at Catterick Camp a few weeks after my maiden speech, I was struck down with acute appendicitis. I was taken to Darlington, and operated upon immediately. It was a sad business lying there, suddenly cut off from the activities of the House, with only Hansard to tell me, two days late, of all that I was missing. My only joy was my post-bag. It took a long time to filter through to my constituency that I was out of action, and the stream of letters still poured in. I was asked to kick off at a football match at a time when it took two nurses to pull me up in bed. I had hardly come round from the anæsthetic when an indignant elector wrote to tell me that he was astounded not to see my name in the division list on some dangerous drugs Act. I tried to stop the flood by issuing *communiqués* as to my condition.

That set all the madmen loose. One woman began her letter, "I hear that you have just had an operation for appendicitis ; I am very glad. I hope that you will realise that this is the judgment of God for your vote in favour of the opening of Sunday cinemas." It seemed a little hard that the Almighty, searching through the division list containing the names of some two hundred supporters of the Bill, should pick on me to vent Divine displeasure. Every herbalist in the country weighed in with pamphlets, with passages marked in red, giving instances where operations for appendicitis had been deservedly fatal.

The executive of the Bristol North Labour Party met, and adopted a prospective Labour candidate. I am sure that it was not meant unkindly. The meeting was probably arranged weeks before I was taken ill. But it gave me, as the charwomen say, "quite a turn." For it was so horribly

reminiscent of the announcement, "Death of an M.P." which always ends with the words, "The figures at the last election were—; no action will be taken by the parties until after the funeral."

I had a striking instance of the extraordinary comradeship of Parliament. Mr. Charles Peat, the member for Darlington, who was of another party, and whom I had never hitherto met, took me off to his country house to recuperate. The more I see of the House of Commons, the more I am impressed by the kindness of members to one another. Some years ago a Labour member of a particularly fiery persuasion was taken seriously ill. Only a holiday in Switzerland, his doctor said, would save his life. It was far beyond his means. A subscription was started, in the House of Commons, and, though the Labour member never knew who was responsible, he had his holiday in Switzerland.

I shall always remember my return to the House of Commons. I limped in very slowly, and stood for a few minutes at the Bar of the House. I saw Mr. Baldwin looking at me, and whispering something to the Chief Whip. A few minutes later, Captain Margesson brought me a message. It was from Mr. Baldwin, to say that I did not look well enough to return to the House, and that, in my own interests, I ought to take a longer holiday. Now, I did not know Mr. Baldwin. I had never spoken to him. I was not of his party, and I had taken, on more than one occasion, a rather offensive line against his policy. His message was a real act of kindness, and of a sort that I can well understand endears him to his followers more than most leaders.

I took his advice, and went off to recuperate at Aix-les-Bains. The year before, Aix-les-Bains had come into English history. For it was Mr. Baldwin's annual place of pilgrimage, and when, the preceding August, Mr. Baldwin interrupted his annual holiday to come home, then returned, and, a few days later, forsook it again for England, it was realised that the crisis was indeed upon us.

Statesmen are true to form, even in their choice of holiday resorts. Mr. Gladstone favoured Biarritz, where the great

Biscayan rollers beat and pound the shore, so reminiscent of his own rolling periods, beating and pounding along the front Opposition bench.

It is not surprising that Mr. Lloyd George likes to take a sea voyage in the depths of winter. He is always at his best in a storm.

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, when he is out of office, visits Ceylon or Cairo or Canada—anywhere, in fact, where there is a problem for him and his colleagues to puzzle out. He is equally at his best in answer to the address of welcome.

At first sight it might appear inconsistent for England's Public Orator to desert her once a year for a French spa. But this is not so. Mr. Baldwin is not far away from Worcester-shire at Aix-les-Bains. There are green valleys and pleasant-voiced peasants to gossip with, and the smell of mown hay. The whole countryside is a Baldwin peroration, for here is a society, spared the teasing problems of industrialism, living contentedly on the soil.

There is even a poet to be discovered. Lamartine lived at Aix, and one of the most famous of his poems was written of the lake that borders it.

There are no tiresome local problems to vex the brain of resting statesmen. Savoy, it is true, as late as 1858, belonged to Italy. The baths were opened by Victor Emmanuel himself; by a special dispensation, the monasteries were spared the anti-clerical crusade of 1905, and still contain monks; even the railway tunnels along the mountain-side by the edge of the lake are built on the Italian model. Savoy was ceded to France as the price of Napoleon III's assistance to Italy against Austria, and though an Italian patois can be heard in the market place of Aix there is no disposition to regard Savoy as an Italian irredenta.

Aix-les-Bains, indeed, faintly suggests the venue of a Conservative conference forty years ago. Down the exquisitely shaded streets the ladies still do their morning shopping in one-horse Victorias. On the hottest days the men promenade in black coats and white stiff shirts, and very tight striped trousers and brown shoes, for this is one

of the playgrounds of Paris, and Parisian fashions always seem to be forty years behind Savile Row.

The baths have been quite untouched, even to the pictures outside, which depict the style of hair and bathing-dress that were fashionable in England about the time of the first Jubilee. It might be the Droitwich that Mr. Baldwin knew in the 'nineties.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### ON THE EVE OF POWER

AIX-LES-BAINS certainly worked wonders for me, and by the end of August 1932, I felt fit to carry on as a journalist again. I had a telegram from Frank Milton<sup>1</sup> suggesting a meeting in Wiesbaden, and I set off for my first visit to Germany.

I had not got out of the station at Frankfurt before I was up against the appalling destitution of post-war Germany. It was six o'clock in the morning when I arrived, and I sought a resting-place in the main station waiting-room. I recoiled in horror as I opened the door. There was an uneasy stirring in the half-light. It seemed to be alive. I looked again, and saw that every corner was occupied by sleeping men. They were on the tables, on the floor, propped up uneasily on chairs, lying curled up on the window-sills—ragged, half-clothed, half-starved human beings. It was like a Collier picture in the Academy of the 'nineties—"The Hopeless Dawn." The station waiting-room was a doss-house for the unemployed. I felt the least I could do was not to bring an awakening to these wretched creatures any sooner than was necessary. I wandered back into the station. What a contrast it was—this vast, domed building, almost like a cathedral in its splendour and spaciousness. Was it symbolic of post-war democratic Germany—a fine façade sheltering misery and rottenness? These great baroque banks and wide, imposing boulevards outside—were their foundations collapsing? I recalled some statistics about Essen. In the mighty steel-works, known throughout the world, there were in 1932 precisely thirteen thousand employed. Had the eagle become a raven?

I was interrupted in this sombre questioning by the arrival of Milton, and together we went for a day on the

<sup>1</sup> To whom this book is dedicated.

Rhine. On the way we saw the marks of the recent election on the walls. A poster warfare in chalk had been in progress. The Social Democrats had written up their banners on factory walls like this :

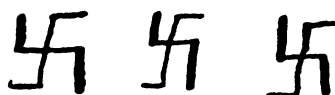


The Nazis had come along and converted them thus :

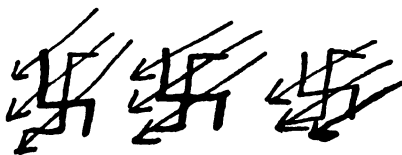


It was meant to depict umbrellas, and umbrellas in Germany are the sign of effeminacy.

The Social Democrats had counter-attacked. Where they found Nazi signs on the walls thus :



they cut through them with their own banner. Thus they appeared :



It was meant to depict their own triumph over the Nazis. But the war was not confined to chalk. Even in Wiesbaden, outwardly as tranquil as Cheltenham, there had been several political murders.

The trip up the Rhine was a great thrill, as indeed, any first visit to Germany must be for any of my generation. For I spent my public-school years at a time when Germany was as remote from this country as the man in the moon. The war propaganda had, in fact, so sunk into my mind that I really imagined that all Germans were bullet-headed, bespectacled horrors, with rolls of sausages sticking out

of their jaws and a *penchant* for bayoneting babies. It was a real surprise to find slim, laughing, fair-haired girls waiting upon us in the Rhineland restaurants. Could this charming, kindly people really view without dismay, even with relish, another world catastrophe? We pondered this and many other kindred questions as the steamer chug-chugged through those magnificent wooded defiles—as other young men must similarly have pondered them in the early summer days of 1914.

Surely the outlook had changed. We certainly found most refreshing evidence of it when we arrived in Cologne. It seemed a town that had once known militarism consciously adapting itself to the arts of peace. We saw the old parade-ground. It was now traversed by lines of young trees. If there had been troops to review, there would have been no room for them to manœuvre. We saw the old, dismantled forts on the river. One of them now housed Cologne's smartest restaurant. We visited a youth hostel. There were two notices that caught my eye in the entrance-hall. One read: "We want friendships, not battleships"; and the other: "Nothing is forbidden here that does not forbid itself." In the old days it had been a barracks.

I left the next morning for Berlin, and this was the last I saw of the old post-war Germany. I wonder what has happened to those notices now? The strange thing is that militant Nazism and *Wandervogel* spring in a sense from the same source—love of doing hard things because they are hard, and the discipline and comradeship that go with them. Such idealism as there is in Nazism has its roots in the *Wandervogel* movement that it superseded. It is just a twist that has been given to it. But what a twist! The *Wandervogel* was one of the greatest guarantees of a long period of peace in Europe; Nazism is the most alarming index that the peace may not last.

It was another Germany that I saw in Berlin. My first sight of it was the parade of the Stahlhelm in the Templerhof, once the scene of glittering Imperial reviews and now the Croydon aerodrome of Germany. The



Stahlhelm were—for they have since been disbanded—the faithful remnant of the bodyguard of the Empire that kept together through the darkest days of the occupation, the inflation, and the Socialist reaction. It was the union of ex-Service men—a sort of British Legion except that, unlike the British Legion, it had a strong political urge. The Stahlhelm were an impressive sight as they manoeuvred in the vast aerodrome, 150,000 strong, in their grey uniforms almost indistinguishable from the standing army. The Crown Prince was there, and General von Mackensen, still straight and stern, the embodiment of pre-war Prussianism. Chancellor von Papen and General Schleicher took the salute at the march past, for this was a Stahlhelm Government. A solemn vow was taken. Vows were common that month. This was an oath to be true to the last breath to the black, white, and red banners of the old Imperial flag.

It was all rather moving. There were tears in the eyes of those who stood around me. The parade was a glimpse of the governing class Germany of their youth. Rather foolishly, I chattered to my companion in English. A woman turned on me suddenly. "Please, please don't talk English; can't you see what this means to us?" Feeling that I had been rather a cad, I apologised and was silent. The cavalcade swung past us; mostly men well on in years now, grim, war scarred, and then, following behind them, youth, a little bewildered and uncomfortable. The pre-war pageant meant nothing to them, and somehow its revival seemed to be missing its appeal now.

A few days later I saw the forces of the rival nationalism. It was a Nazi meeting addressed by Goering in the Sports Palast. Youth was in its element there, as it stood brown-shirted, rank after rank in front of him. The meeting seemed run for them. It was to them he made his appeal, not to bring back the old Germany, but to create a new one. I did not understand all his references to the Herren-club, but they were clearly opprobrious, for they were greeted with roars of mocking laughter. The driving-force of both demonstrations was the same—the passionate desire to

wipe out the humiliations of defeat—but the manner of its expression was very different. The Nazis understood the new psychology of the German patriots. They had no faith in the Stahlhelm Government, not because it stood for patriotism, militarism, and nationalism, but because it was identified with people and bodies who stood for these things in the past, and whose régime ended in defeat and despair. Middle-class youth was not prepared to re-establish the old militarism of the Junker classes. They wanted the old militarism, but they were determined this time to run it themselves. The revolution, when it came, should be a middle-class revolution.

I realised how wide was the gulf between the old Nationalists and the Nazis when the Government met the Reichstag. There sat von Papen on the Ministerial dais in the corner seat from which von Bülow and Bethmann-Holweg had tried to control hostile Parliaments. He was nervous and self-conscious, quite out of place in the unaccustomed atmosphere of Parliament. A vote of censure was being moved on his Government. He tried to forestall it by presenting to the Speaker a decree of dissolution. The Speaker was Goering. He pushed aside the decree, as it was presented to him, with the palm of his hand. It was a significant gesture. It was really the new Germany rejecting once and for all, as an alternative the Government of the old governing class.

A division took place. The whole House voted against the Government, Communists, Centre Party, Social Democrats, Nazis—all except the thirty faithful followers of the Nationalist, Herr Hugenberg. The Stahlhelm Government was censured by 513 votes to 32. But more than that went with it. It was a censure on the parliamentary system from from which it never recovered.

Another election was declared, but the Radical forces had no heart in it. I met Herr Breitscheid—the Arthur Henderson of Social Democracy in Germany—a few days later. He had no stomach for the fight. His party was losing its youth at once to the Nazis and the Communists.

It had no fighting message to Germany, and he knew it. Democracy was in a hopeless position. Who could hope to form a Democratic Government? The Centre Party, being a Catholic party, had no chance of increasing its numbers much beyond its existing strength. The Nationalists started with only forty members, so were out of the fight from the start. There were only the Communists left, and they were the best recruiting-sergeants of the Nazis. It was clear that the Nazis had the battle in their hands.

If it could have been foreseen how they would use their victory, the Social Democrats and the Communists might have been more reluctant to vote in the same lobby with them that September afternoon. For they were next to meet in the concentration camps, with the Nazis as guards.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### I MEET MY FIRST NAZI

**W**HO WERE THESE NAZIS? On all sides was the tramp of young men. Brown-shirted, disciplined, they swung down the main streets. They were confident, smart, alert. They gave the impression of men who had a mission that was on the eve of fulfilment. What was it all about? It was obvious that if I was to understand something of this new, puzzling, dangerous Germany I must try and make contact with a typical representative of this fervent youth.

So I made use of an introduction, and sought out a young student in Berlin University. I discovered more from him in an hour's talk than in a score of apologies from official quarters. His room alone was an explanation of the Nazi movement. It was bare and crude, but every article in it had its significance. The only decoration on the walls was an immense map of Germany, with the lost territories marked in red. The mantelpiece contained one photograph—that of Adolf Hitler. The furniture consisted of a deal table and two hard-backed chairs. There was a hiker's equipment, complete with ropes and climbing-irons, in one corner, and a duelling outfit in another. The only other decorations were a wireless set and a row of beer-mugs—the trophies of students' drinking bouts. A producer of a film illustrating the rise of the Nazi movement could not have produced a more convincing "stage set." It was clear the student was immensely proud of it, for he asked me what I thought of his room, and how it would compare with that of an Oxford student. A little embarrassed, I replied, "I like it. It represents many of the qualities I admire in your nation—it's simplicity and its hardness. Of course, in Oxford, the average undergraduate's room, if I may say so, would be more comfortable than this. There would be armchairs and cushions. Quite likely there would

be flowers on the table. There would certainly be books. You have not any books, have you? There would be pictures on the walls——” “Yes,” he interrupted. “Pictures of actresses, I suppose. You English are soft.”

I was so taken aback by this outburst that I did not answer for a moment, and he was silent. Then I said, “I think that is the most terrible remark I have heard since the war, for it tells me that history is repeating itself—and it hardly bears contemplation of what the result will be. You say that the English are soft. That was the tragic mistake that your fathers and elder brothers made a generation ago. They thought that, because we were an un-military nation, we could never produce an army. Read the ex-Kaiser’s memoranda, and you will see that idea running all through it. Do you remember what Bismarck said of the British Army?—‘I would send over a *gendarme* to arrest it.’ Surely Mons and Ypres and the Somme and the Passchendaele Ridge opened your nation’s eyes?”

“You fool—don’t you see that a nation that has peopled a fifth of the globe cannot be wholly contemptible in war? There are cushions and pictures and books in an Oxford undergraduate’s room, but there will also be cricket-bats and footballs, and, if he is rich, the equipment of the rider to hounds. Because we don’t like wearing uniforms, and being ordered about on hot dusty parade grounds, in God’s name don’t think we are soft! That attitude of mind makes war certain.” I said all this, and much more besides, for I was deeply moved, and I like to think that I made some impression.

At any rate we seemed to understand one another better, and we relapsed into a long calm talk on the political situation. In it I understood something of the bitterness of a youth born in an empire reeling to disaster. He told me of his mother, who had lost all her savings in the inflation, and her struggle to give him a good education, and of the hopelessness now of getting employment. He told me of the horrors of the occupation—the excesses of the French troops; their intolerable insolence and arrogance. He asked me why

it was that England gave blind support to France, and why the British Government had tamely acquiesced in the veto by the Quai d'Orsay of every attempt to revise the Peace Treaty after the war. He dwelt on the humiliating defencelessness of Germany—of how mysterious Polish aeroplanes were always flying over eastern Germany ; of German officers who had strayed, on a winter sports expedition, into the demilitarised zone, and their arrest had been demanded by the French. He reverted again and again to the iniquities of the Peace Treaty. Their own President, in order to reach his estates at Neubeck in East Prussia had to pass through Polish territory. The great port of Danzig, though it was ninety per cent German, was administered under foreign supervision. Even Belgium had expanded her territory by the seizure of Malmedy, to which she had no sort of right.

I could not suffer the last point in silence, and I interrupted to remind him something of the history of the war, and of the excuse that Belgium had for exacting the harshest terms. That set him off on "The Guilt Clauses" of the Treaty, and I was made to realise what an insane act it was for the victors to insist, under duress, that on Germany rested the sole responsibility of the war. But I ruthlessly brought him back to Belgium. "Whatever you may say about the responsibilities of other nations for the catastrophe, there is one thing that you cannot say, and that is that Belgium invaded Germany."

But on the whole it was a reasonably fair exposition of the wrongs of Germany. There were distortions and exaggerations, but not worse than there would have been if history had been reversed and it had been a young Englishman who had grown up to face the consequences of a Carthaginian peace. He really summed it up when, as I rose to go, he said, "You see, the difficulty of a young man like myself is, that we have never known normal times—first semi-starvation, then the surrender of 1918, then the occupation, then the inflation, then economic collapse, and now a state verging on civil war. Can you wonder that we are what we are?" Frankly, I could not.

That evening I witnessed how easy it was to work that natural sense of humiliation and frustration into something like mass hysteria. I attended a Hitlerite meeting in Berlin. I took the precaution of taking with me a Nazi as an escort. I was glad that I had done so, for I do not think that alone I could have faced that concourse. The roads to the meeting were blocked with a surging mass of uniformed men. Some of them were troops of the Reichswehr—the professional army—ordered to stand by in case there was trouble ; at four-hundred-yard intervals police were passing and re-passing. Every approach was blocked with Nazi Storm Troopers.

My first thought was, "What a terrible commentary on German democracy !" It was apparently impossible for a party to hold a meeting without having the army and the police force and a vast uniformed detachment of their own supporters to protect it from their opponents. It was actually, I discovered, a penal offence for an ordinary citizen to stand in the streets and watch his fellow citizens exercising their elementary rights of attending a meeting.

Inside was the most remarkable demonstration I have ever seen. The meeting place was twice the size of the Albert Hall. The audience had been queuing up since three o'clock to hear speeches that were timed to begin at 8.15. Yet every ticket of admission had to be paid for—roughly, a shilling for the employed, and sixpence for the unemployed. There were no seats. They stood in serried ranks on the floor, and tier on tier on the balcony—young, uniformed, aflame with enthusiasm. I tried to think what would be the equivalent of such a meeting in England. The nearest approach to it would be a mass gathering of boy scouts, the Salvation Army, and Junior Imperial Leaguers, united by some great cause outside themselves, if any such there could be. There was iron discipline and ruthless nationalism and deep religious fervour all combined in the one single entity of that audience.

The proceedings began with the singing of " Deutschland

Über Alles"—a most moving experience. Then there were processions and torchlights and flags, and a whole staff college of Nazi leaders, and then . . . der Führer, the leader, the idol, the embodiment of the longings of the youth of a nation, Adolf Hitler himself.

I had only seen Hitler in photographs, and frankly I was not impressed. The face of Hitler, that stares down from half of the shop-windows of Germany, gives no clue to the riddle of the revolution. "This is no dictator," one exclaims. Mussolini at least looks the part, with his compelling eyes and his jaw of iron; Stalin appears the embodiment of relentless revolution down the ages; even Sir Oswald Mosley has a certain magnetism in his make-up—he has only to give the dictator's look in a restaurant for waiters to scurry about his orders in all directions.

But where is the strength in Hitler—those watery eyes, that receding jaw, that drooping curl, that ridiculous Charlie Chaplin moustache? Johnson said of Burke that you could not meet him sheltering from a shower of rain without realising that you were in the presence of a great man. Anyone who met Hitler under such circumstances would take him for a hard-working scout-master out for the day.

But he would not think so if he had seen him on a political platform. The moment he began to speak, for me he was transformed from a vulgar, self-advertising politician to an orator, a prophet with a flaming mission to his people.

Admittedly he had everything to help him—the dazzling ceremonial of massed bands and fluttering banners, with the limelight trained on to him from the roof, and every device known to the impresario in shameless operation. But, though they may heighten his effects, they do not account for them.

It is difficult to set down in cold print the electricity of his oratory. It communicates itself to the audience until their enthusiasm developes into hysteria, and from hysteria into something like frenzy. He seldom strays from his theme, the wrongs of Germany since 1918. Slowly he creates the



fiction of the unbeaten Germany. It is not all purple patches. There are drab and involved periods. Men who have not heard him before whisper to one another, "Can this be the great Hitler?" They look at their watches and wonder how much longer it will last. Like the supreme artist he is, Hitler senses the atmosphere, and decides it is time for high-light number one. He pauses. "I am the unknown soldier," he begins. A daring, even an outrageous, remark, considering the modern connotation of the phrase. Every eye is riveted on him. "I know what war means," he continues. "I know the stink of corpses rotting in the morning sun. I know the anguish of the battlefield. In 1918 we were victorious on every front. We had penetrated deeply into the territory of the enemy. We had victory in our grasp. Then what happened? WE WERE STABBED IN THE BACK AT HOME. Who stabbed us? The Jews." The audience shrieks itself hoarse.

Then back again to rather drab dull stuff about the Peace Treaty and immediate post-war politics. Again the men who do not know their Hitler get a little bored. Again Hitler immediately senses it, and decides that the time has come for high-light number two. He picks out a man in the audience, who is obviously unemployed. He pauses, points a dramatic finger at him, and then pours forth a torrent of almost demonic oratory. "You are out of work," he shouts. "You are cold and hungry. Every day you make the hopeless search for work. Every day you are met with the terrible poster—'No Hands Wanted.' You are losing hope. Who is responsible for your condition? The Jews. You stand begging your bread outside the great restaurants, while, inside, some fat swine of a Jew sits guzzling, taking the job you ought to have." The cheering becomes positively frightening, almost like wild beasts hungering for their prey.

Then comes the final peroration. This has only an indirect reference to the Jews as associated with Marxists. To Hitler the Jews are Marxists, and the Marxists are Jews. exactly the Nazis mean by Marxists is not clear. Poi asked a leading Nazi the question, but the only answer. It

was, "A follower of Karl Marx," which was not exactly helpful. Marxism is responsible for all the evils that have come upon them since the war. In this general condemnation are linked Socialists, Democrats, Liberals, Pacifists, and, above all, Jews—anyone who has had any part or lot in post-war German Governments. They are responsible for the Peace Treaty, the occupation, inflation, unemployment, the present defencelessness of Germany, the loss of hope in youth—everything, in fact, to which modern Germany is heir, and some of them to which every country is a victim. Often Hitler's indictment should have been directed, not to Germany's rulers, but the twentieth century. Hitler's indignation rises to a crescendo. He puts his hand to his head, and his voice becomes literally a shriek as he makes his last appeal to his race comrades "to see to it that Marxism is rooted out."

The veins stand out, the eyes are glazed, sweat pours from his face. It is as if Hitler was in a trance. He sinks back in a state of complete physical exhaustion, but he has given his audience exactly what they wanted. As they pour out into the street the light of battle is in their eyes. Their faith has been strengthened, and their determination to win through, whatever it may cost, is at boiling-point.

As I watch them, I wonder how such oratory, sincere certainly but, judged by any ordinary standard, so cheap, so shallow, so hysterical, could set the heather alight. It reminds me of nothing so much as the speeches of the late miner leader Mr. A. J. Cook. I have seen him at miners' gala afternoons work himself up into a frenzy not unlike that of Herr Hitler. For the first time I am inclined to agree with that quotation of which Mr. Baldwin is so fond: "Oratory is the harlot of the arts." It is a frightening art that can give to one man such unreasoning power over his fellow men. Then I remember that Germany has not the safeguard that exists in countries where democracy has had some kind of expression for centuries, the fact that the voters understand the limitations of oratory. When the British electors hear Mr. Lloyd George, or Mr. Churchill, or Sir

Stafford Cripps, they regard it all as a good entertainment, and cheerfully go off to the polling-booth and vote for their opponents. They have heard it all before. Their fathers heard Joe Chamberlain, and their grandfathers came under the spell of Bright and Gladstone. They can put oratory in its right perspective. Not so the Germans. They have never really heard great oratory. Bismarck had a voice "like a tin whistle," Bethmann-Holweg had no popular appeal, and Liebnicht was not in the front rank. The leaders of the Third Republic did not realise the importance of oratory ; they thought it was enough explanation of their policy to issue from time to time stilted *communiqués* to the Press. Hitler saw his chance, and that stupendous meeting was the result.

Not merely did he grasp the aspirations of young Germany, but he was able to dramatise them in himself, and, what was more, he imagined that he knew who was responsible for their non-fulfilment. He had given Germany, not merely an ideal and a uniform in which to fight for it, but that most powerful factor in successful human combinations—something to hate as well. Observers had told me that the power of Hitler was waning ; that he would lose a score of seats at the forthcoming election ; that his movement could not survive a setback. As I came away from that meeting, I felt that sooner or later a Nazi victory was inevitable, and, when it should come, I pitied the fate of the Marxists and the Jews.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### BERLIN AT NIGHT—PRE-HITLER

COMING BACK to my hotel from the meeting, my young Nazi friend suddenly worked himself up into a passion of moral indignation. We were passing down the Kurfürstendamm. It was clear that it was the Piccadilly Circus district of Berlin. Flashing sky-signs and liveried attendants showed that it was a street of restaurants and *cabarets*. I was puzzled at my companion's fury, for it seemed to me to be merely a replica of every street of pleasure that I had ever passed down on my travels. I had seen the same things in New York and Bombay, Honolulu and Winnipeg, Colombo and Constantinople, and for all the variety that there was in them I might never have left London.

But to the young Nazi it was *Nacht-leben*, and night-life as such represented apparently the orgies of Rome under Nero. Night-life was an abomination. When Hitler came into power he would burn this district to the ground. As my companion blazed out this denunciation, he clicked his heels on the pavement and broke into an exaggerated military stride. "This is the sound the Jews hate to hear," he explained to me. "It means that Nazis are about. It is the Jews that are responsible for this beastliness."

By this time I was extremely hungry, and suggested supper. But it took a long time to find a suitable place, for each one had to be carefully vetted first to see that it contained no Jews. The presence of Jews meant the likelihood of a brawl.

I determined after this night to investigate more carefully Berlin night-life. I had heard, of course, of Berlin as the centre of obscure and unsavoury abnormalities, but I imagined that they were confined to one or two cafés known only to those who sought out that kind of thing.

My nocturnal adventures up to this time had produced only the Vaterland Haus. That certainly was unusual.

Indeed, it has to be seen to be believed. It is an immense glass house, built tier on tier, rather like the design for a jacket of an Aldous Huxley novel. On each floor there are two restaurants, each representing a country and decorated like a Drury Lane conception of it. Thus, in search of a Bath bun, you find yourself in a Texas bar, not merely with cowboys and wood logs, but complete to the last Hollywood detail, with pictures of President Lincoln on the wall.

I moved to the floor below for a glass of beer, and found it being presented to me by girls in peasant dress, before a back-cloth of mountains, to the tune of "Auf Wiedersehen" played by an orchestra arrayed like the members of the chorus of the *White Horse Inn*. Arthur Collins himself could not have staged better the storm over the Rhineland, with thunder and lightning followed by the sun and a rainbow, which I found taking place through the door opposite. This last entertainment I was allowed to witness without even the purchase of a roll and butter.

I had been to the usual cafés to be found in any Continental town—wooden tables and chairs and waiters who always make the customers work out their own bills. The one by the Hessler, where I was staying, was the meeting-place of old-fashioned Bohemia. I had seen Einstein playing chess there one night. One waiter told me proudly that he played it very badly. His real successes were obtained at a game called "Go," which had been known to take seven years to finish. These experiences had been mildly interesting, but they could not be described as orgiastic.

I determined to explore further. But I wanted to do it as un-self-consciously as possible. Any journalist can find unsavoury cafés if he goes to look for them. I wanted to discover whether it was impossible to have an ordinary evening out without being brought up against these nameless horrors that so disturbed my Nazi friend.

I invited a German girl, to whom I had been given an introduction, to come and dine and dance. Over dinner at the Eden she told me that she gathered that I wanted "to see the sights," and we set off for a round of the night-clubs.

Let me say at the outset that I am the worst possible person for such a tour. I find night-clubs as dreary as they are expensive—a horrible mixture of hiccuping saxophones and warm champagne. In London, my very presence can reduce the brightest party to the deepest gloom. I am in a perpetual condition of wanting to go home when the rest of the party are loudly of the opinion that the night has not yet begun. Indeed, the average party does not get going until I have left it.

This tour did not begin until an hour when I had hoped that it might be ending. Berlin night-life did not apparently take down its shutters until the next morning. But I must confess that the moment we started, about midnight, my incipient yawns ceased. For Berlin night-life in the pre-Hitler régime was unlike anything that I had ever seen before or ever want to see again.

Our first place of call was a restaurant where we ate sandwiches round a lily-pond, with real water and real lilies. There were artificial trees, but they were compensated for by the fact that real birds were twittering in the branches. We then went on to a dance-hall as big as a Popular café in London. Its object was quite obvious. It was there that one picked up for the evening the companion of one's choice. To facilitate the process of meeting without introduction, telephones formed part of the equipment of each table. It was simplicity itself. You looked round, and rang up the girl of your choice ; or, if you were shy and hesitant and seemed nice to know, you might find the telephone bell announcing that some girl had chosen you.

What surprised me about this place was that it was so completely German. There are haunts of this kind in any capital in Europe, but they all have the air of being run for the benefit of the foreigner. This was clearly the meeting-ground, if not of exclusive Berlin, certainly of the Prussian middle classes up from the country. It was a brothel on a large scale, yet it was attended by the same kind of people as in this country are to be found at Corner Houses or Palais de Dance. It was clear that there was something

in the Nazi contention that there had been since the war a dangerous slackening in conventional morality.

But more ugly sights followed. We went next to a place as to the nature of which there was absolutely no doubt. Middle-aged men were dancing with boys not out of their teens, and young men with powdered faces and swaying hips sidled up and down in women's evening dress. One of these creatures asked my companion for a dance. She declined, but was clearly not in the least put out by the creature's appearance or manner. I imagine that such a place could be paralleled in London, but at least it would be down some dingy back stairs, and the proprietor would be in constant terror of raids by the police. This restaurant, however, was in one of the best-known streets of the pleasure quarter in Berlin; it was the centre of fashion; one was taken to it as one would take a visiting foreigner to the Café de Paris in London.

It was the same with the next place we visited. Here the abnormality was of another kind, but it was equally blatant. There were the same kind of well-dressed German men and women looking on as nonchalantly as if it had been a Golders Green skating-rink. The proprietress suggested that for a consideration we might be admitted where visitors were not usually allowed—"the Girls' Club" at the back. But by this time I had had more than enough of sight-seeing, and suggested to my companion that we should forthwith end our tour. When I had taken her home, I dismissed my taxi and walked back into the Unter den Linden down to the Friedrichstrasse. In five minutes' walk I was "accosted" more often than in a year in London.

This was September 1932. I am told that by then Berlin night-life was a Sunday-school treat compared with what it had been a few years before. But even what I saw was enough to provide material for a dozen moral crusades.

Nor was it the antics of the rich alone that gave fuel to the Nazi evangelists. The next night I plunged into working-class Berlin. This time I wanted to test the rising political temper. I had plenty of opportunity. Though I timed my

visit for the early hours of the morning, the cafés were full, and more noisy than at 10 p.m. in an English industrial town on an election night. The talk was almost exclusively on politics, and at times it would flare up into an ugly brawl. Political feeling was running so high that it was regarded as highly unsafe for either Communists or Nazis to stray outside their political cafés. The hatreds of Moslems and Hindus in the rabbit-warrens of the cities of India did not out-distance the antagonisms of political parties in Germany in September 1932.

Here, too, I was brought right up against the agonising poverty. I met men who admitted—and their appearance was a witness to the truth of their words—that they had not eaten meat for a month. It was the pleasant custom of some cafés to provide rolls of bread free of charge, like the salt and mustard in English restaurants. Thus the purchase of one glass of beer gave the right to free bread, and thousands of unemployed existed for weeks on no other diet.

They would sit half the day and all the night in front of their tankards, pretending to drink when the last dregs had long since been drained. But in that time they would see more drama than in any cinema.

The barman was quite likely to be a Russian aristocrat, who would be persuaded to describe the orgies of the Revolution, and before the evening was out an ex-Prussian officer, imagining himself back in the gay, arrogant days of pre-war militarism, would be challenging, for some fancied slight, his neighbour to a duel.

Side by side with these cafés were places of quite as ill repute as any I had seen in the neighbourhood of the Kurfürstendamm. They opened at 3 a.m. when the rest had closed down. Except that the clientele were working class, the unlovely atmosphere was precisely the same.

If café life was any index, the state of Berlin in September 1932 was physically and morally rotten.

My mind went back to my Nazi friend. What I had seen these last two nights did more than a hundred disquisitions on the philosophy of dictatorship to explain his fervour and his uniform.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### HINDENBURG—IRON OR MATCHBOARD?

**B**UT THERE WAS still one obstacle in the path of Hitler. All eyes were turned to him. Was he an iron curtain or painted matchboard?

President Hindenburg was on the eve of his eighty-fifth birthday. If fidelity to the Fatherland was the test, no man had greater right to be called in as the arbiter of Germany's future in her most formidable crisis since seven years earlier he had been voted into the leadership of the Republic.

Hindenburg's life is a bridge, not between ages, but between centuries. He was born at Posen in 1847, when the mighty Napoleon and the catastrophe of Jena were still a personal memory. He took part in the battles that humbled Austria in 1866; he saw Kaiser Wilhelm I ride in triumph through Paris in 1871; and he contributed in August 1914 as least as much as Ludendorff to the drowning of Tsarist hopes in the terrible Masurian Lakes.

He saw the German Empire welded together in 1870 with shot and steel, and he was commander-in-chief of the German armies when they crashed in irretrievable ruin in November 1918—and now he was, fourteen years afterwards, not merely the President of the German Republic, but the symbol of the steadfastness of a nation in defeat and the earnest of its future regeneration. Only that year, faced by the opposition of Hitler himself, he had received from the German peoples another overwhelming vote of confidence.

In those critical days I set myself to find out whether there was still anything of substance behind the legend. I found that even in the middle eighties he was no figurehead. Far more than is usually supposed, he was personally responsible for the establishment of the von Papen Government. The

morning of the fateful day when the Reichstag was dissolved he devoted to a series of interviews with his Ministers, and an Ambassador who saw him just before luncheon told me that he had clearly grasped every implication of the perilous situation.

That he could do this at eighty-five was not a little due to the vigorous habits of his life. He is always on active service. He has no luxuries and no pleasures in the ordinary sense of the term. He rises early, eats little, takes his prescribed exercise, and is never later to bed than 9 p.m.

He never visits the theatre. He was not even present in 1928 when memories of pre-war grandeurs were revived with a semi-state gala performance in the Kaiser's private theatre at Potsdam. An annual garden-party and a dinner to the diplomats have been for years the extent of his official entertainments.

His own personal position has never meant anything to him. In the last presidential election, in the spring of 1932, he refused to wait up for the results, or even to be wakened when the issue was known. His bedtime was nine o'clock. The voting figures could wait until morning.

His only intimate confidant is his son, himself a man well into the sixties. At state functions he can be seen leaning on his arm. There is also his barber. Despite his eighty-five years, he has still a formidable crop of hair. Secretaries at Embassies and journalists say that when they want to discover what is in the President's mind they pay a visit to his hairdresser.

Hindenburg does not worry his head about bluebooks or any more Government papers than are absolutely necessary. His guides are his principles. They are discipline and duty and the Fatherland.

His hatreds are as simple as his loyalties. There was no secret of the fact in Berlin, the autumn before Hitler's triumph, that the President had taken a strong aversion to the idol of Nazi Germany. He disliked Hitler rather as Gladstone hated Disraeli. Hindenburg could hardly bear to be in the room with Hitler. When asked his opinion of Hitler after

his first meeting with him, he replied, "I know the type. They are like the Austrian rifles in the war. They don't shoot straight." The comment is as revealing of the man who made it as it is of the man of whom it was made. Hindenburg always shoots straight.

All his life he has viewed the world in the simple terms of the battlefield. When I was in Berlin, the President gave an audience to General Higgins of the Salvation Army. Though neither could speak the other's language, they were immediately in tune with one another. The meeting was a great success. I can well understand it. The Salvation Army is, after all, the religious expression of that ideal of a powerful self-contained State to which Hindenburg has given his full measure of devotion. It was the coming together of two men who, each in his different sphere, have been living embodiments of the twin watchwords of obedience and service. So in that reeling world he stood a pillar of fidelity. To plots for the restoration of the monarchy he would give no countenance, though a monarchist by deep conviction. He did not waver in his support of the Republic. To it he had taken the oath, and on that there was no going back.

Nor would he agree to any of what Mr. Ramsay MacDonald called on a famous occasion "monkeying with the Constitution." It was an open secret, that week in Berlin, that the von Papen Cabinet had before it plans for the radical alteration of the Weimar Constitution, which included the abolition of proportional representation, the re-establishment of an elective second chamber, and the strengthening of the powers of the President. It was a tempting proposition—particularly the abolition of proportional representation. It was clear from the election results of the last few months that, as it was worked in Germany, no party could ever obtain a majority. But there were the Resolutions at Weimar. They could not be altered by the decree of the President. To that Constitution he had sworn allegiance, and for better or for worse, it must be given another trial. As I recorded in my diary at the time: "If the Republic crashes it will not be by Hindenburg's hand."

Hindenburg in those weeks was the one remaining linchpin of the post-war order in Germany. I heard Chancellor von Papen over the wireless, the night that the Reichstag fell, define his election slogan. It was : " For Hindenburg and Germany." For the time being the two were interdependent.

But for how long ? Hindenburg's prestige was immense. He was really the only prop of the von Papen Government. He brought it support from the centre that it would not otherwise have had. He seemed, indeed, some sort of check—perhaps the only one—on the Nazi extravagances. It was significant that, at a Nazi meeting I attended, the howls that greeted the names of the members of the existing German Cabinet died away as Hindenburg's name was mentioned. His was the only non-Nazi name in all Germany that could produce, if not cheers, at any rate silence.

If the dams broke, could he control the flood ? Shrewd observers were not hopeful.

It was whispered that he had his faults. One of them was that he tended to be more faithful to institutions than to people. He had never been served more loyally by any Minister than he had been by Bruening. Yet only that May he had thrown him to the wolves to appease the Nazi clamour. Might he not agree to General Schleicher's head on a charger, or even von Papen's, if Hitler demanded it, and appeared sufficiently strong to insist upon it ?

Then he was not a clever man. After all, in 1914, so far as military employment was concerned, he was on the scrap-heap—a café talker on half pay, with his dogs and his beer-mugs, in Pomerania. Tannenburg was a lucky accident. It was more the incredible jealousies of the Russian generals than his own superior strategy that produced that astounding triumph. It was certainly never repeated. At no time of his life had he the ability or concentration of purpose necessary for riding a political hurricane.

His great age made it even more impossible. Now, at any moment, that strange elastic which we call the brain, that controls our faculty of thought and action, might snap.

After all, it had already remained taut fifteen years beyond the span allotted to human life.

So argued a minority of opinion in Germany, and looked fearfully at the portents in the sky. Hindenburg—iron or matchboard? The minority were strongly inclined to answer, "Matchboard." They had not to wait long to be proved right.

## CHAPTER XXX

### LENGTHENING SHADOWS

I **CROSSED OVER** into France, to find that England, too, apparently was in the grip of a political crisis. But it was of a very different character. "Les ministres Liberaux, quitteront-ils le Cabinet Anglais?" asked the *Paris Soir*. When, two days later, I returned to England, I found political interest centred, not in the portents of the new Germany, but in the prospects of Liberal resignations from the National Government.

The ties that bound the Liberal leaders to the Government, never strong since "the agreement to differ" had been established, snapped with the Ottawa Agreements, and the decision was taken by the Liberal Ministers to resign. Though the course was severely criticised, it is difficult to see that any other could have been taken. The one specific pledge made at the election, both in the Liberal manifesto, and by Liberal candidates, was a declaration against permanent food taxes. In order to preserve the national front this pledge had been stretched to its utmost limits to include the wheat quota. But that could be regarded as an emergency measure. The Ottawa Agreements were of a completely different character. Their avowed aim was to establish a permanent Imperial Customs Union. For Liberals to support it in the Division Lobby would be, not merely to deprive them of the title of Free Traders, but also of honest men. Nor could their opposition be conceivably covered by "the agreement to differ." There was a general feeling after its operation over the Import Duties Bill that it could not be used twice. It placed the dissentient Ministers in an impossible position. If they made mild speeches, their opposition was futile; if they made strong speeches, their opposition was dangerous. They could not, clearly, at one

and the same time make speeches that were both satisfactory to their party and also tolerable to their colleagues in the Government.

So they decided to quit, and there was a howl of execration in the National Government Press. What they were never given any credit for was the extent of their political honesty and public spirit. It cannot be easy to resign the prestige and emoluments of office, especially when they have only been achieved after weary years in the wilderness. Sir Herbert Samuel had been out of office since 1916. Sir Archibald Sinclair had achieved Cabinet rank for the first time—Secretary of State for Scotland at forty-one—it was a position of which anyone might be proud. It is so easy for politicians to give heed to arguments that their presence is necessary in the Cabinet in a time of public danger. The Liberal Ministers, with a rare sense of political realities, recognised that they were in the Government, not as individuals, but as representatives of a section of political thought in the country. That section of thought had long since left the Government. The Ministers had therefore ceased to bring to the Government that support which was the excuse for being in it.

Fresh from my experiences in Germany, I could not help thinking that the excitement that the departure of the Liberal Ministers created was a healthy sign so far as the future of democracy was concerned. Its collapse in Germany was not a little due to the fact that, as in the case of the Government of Louis Philippe, the country was bored. In the Reichstag there were no parliamentarians that captured the imagination of the country. Its members were wholly out of touch with their constituents. I met leaders of the Social Democratic Party who had not come in contact with a genuine working man for years. Owing to the peculiar system of proportional representation then in operation in Germany their constituencies were so impregnable that they never visited them. The personal element hardly entered into German politics. Most electors just learnt the number of their party and voted blindly on the ballot papers. Election

posters often contained merely the exhortation to "Vote Five"—the number of a particular party on the voting sheet. Such a system inevitably leads to the stereotyped personality, and, what is more disastrous, a stabilised party vote.

A second vital factor in the collapse of popular Government had been the extinction of the Liberal-minded voter. The *Staatpartei* in Germany, which corresponded roughly to the Liberal Party here, was reduced to two in the last Reichstag. Though many Liberals adhered to the so-called Centre, it still remained primarily the party of the Catholic minority. Robbed of the balancing forces of Liberalism, opinion had drifted further and further to extremes until the situation had been created where two of the chief political parties were committed in one case to establish a military dictatorship, and in the other the Soviet State. It was encouraging to find that in England the Liberal Party, however small, was determined to maintain its own independence, and, what was more, that its efforts to do so still commanded the public interest.

But there were other signs not so hopeful for the future of English democracy, which the passage of months has only accentuated. There was first of all the irresponsibility of the Labour Opposition. The same lack of courage to stand the risk of unpopularity with their extremists which led to their downfall in October 1931 was again evident. Challenged in one of the full-dress debates of the new session by the Attorney-General as to whether the Opposition had pledged themselves to that motto inscribed on the banners of the unemployed marchers that the "Means Test Must Go," the back benchers shouted, "Yes," and the front benchers were uneasily silent. It was a disquieting spectacle. Clearly there has to be a Means Test of some kind. No Government could ever consent to the shovelling out of the public money to the unemployed without any regulation or enquiry. I cannot see how democracy can survive if it fails to produce leaders on the Left with the courage to tell it the truth.

The peril in which Parliament is placed was emphasised



that week by the presence of the hunger-marchers. From all corners of the country they had gathered, with the determination of marching on Parliament. For several nights the gates of Palace Yard were bolted, and every door and entrance guarded by posses of police. Coming back from dinner one night, I was stopped on the embankment by a chain of policemen stretching right across the road. Peremptorily I was asked where I was going. I stuttered out that I was a member of Parliament going about my business. But evidently I had not acquired the right manner of vacuous pomposity stereotyped in the public mind by the caricatures of politicians in the music-halls. For the only reply was, "We have heard that story before; where is your identification card?" It was as characteristic of the British policeman to ask for an identification card as it was of the mother of Parliaments not to provide its members with one. But it was not pleasant to feel that a Government which less than a year before had received the record majority of history had now to be protected from the very democracy whose creation it was. The cry, "Who goes home?"—which echoes through the corridors of the House of Commons when it rises, and dates from the time when members used to leave in groups in order the better to resist the attacks of foot-pads—had, during that week, an ugly modern connotation.

But there should be nothing but praise on that occasion for the Clydesiders. The speech of Mr. McGovern, the Independent Labour member for the Shettleston Division of Glasgow, was one of the bravest I have heard in the House. He had approached the Speaker with a view to introducing a petition asking that a deputation of unemployed hunger-marchers should be received at the Bar of the House. He had to announce that, since he had had that conversation with the Speaker, his offer to act as a medium between the hunger-marchers and the House of Commons had been rejected, and that the hunger-marchers "had decided to rely on their massed strength to force Parliament to allow their deputation to appear at the Bar. I regret that

decision," McGovern continued, "and come to the conclusion that the unemployed leaders do not wish to appear at the Bar. I feel sure the hunger-marchers will resent the loss of this opportunity, and, although our co-operation has been rejected, we shall still continue in our own way to work on behalf of that unfortunate section of society."

It is an important factor in the stability of parliamentary institutions that the most extreme section in Parliament are really their staunchest guardians. If there is a proposal to deprive private members in any way of their rights of criticism or discussion, or the absence of the responsible Cabinet Ministers from a debate appears to cast a slight on the House, it is from the Maxton group that there comes the most damaging criticism. Indeed they are far better parliamentarians than their late colleagues in the official Opposition above the gangway. When, a few weeks ago, the House was kept sitting from 2.45 one afternoon to 1.28 p.m. the next afternoon, it was Mr. Maxton and not Major Attlee, the official Opposition leader, who made the running. Fascism came in Italy and Germany largely because the extreme Left made the parliamentary system impossible. That will never happen in England if the so-called irreconcilables can work it. They are the relentless enemies of society, but they mean to secure their revolution through parliamentary means. It is unfortunate, so far as the working of this Parliament is concerned, that the official Opposition number fifty-five, and the I.L.P. Opposition only three.

The most pressing dangers to democracy are those inherent in the National Government itself. Parliament is running away from its powers. The whole tendency in this House of Commons has been to delegate its responsibilities to outside bodies. It began with the Tariff Advisory Committee. There was much to be said for taking the details of Tariff legislation out of the hands of Parliament. It could be plausibly argued that it was a safeguard against the lobbying of special interests. But in this House of Commons it is clear that Parliament is not so much delegating its functions as

abdicating them. Whenever an important issue arises, the tendency of the majority of this House of Commons is to run away from its responsibilities. The cry is, "We must take this question outside Parliament altogether, to some committee where important decisions will not be subject to the changing tides of popular opinion in the constituencies." But members of Parliament were elected to make decisions themselves, and, indeed, were swept back to do it by a changing tide in popular opinion. The nadir of parliamentary futility was reached in those Ottawa debates, when a whole new range of taxation was agreed upon at the Imperial Conference three thousand miles away, and had to be accepted by the mother of Parliaments without so much as the alteration of a sub-clause. The Cabinet showed their contempt for the House of Commons by leaving the Treasury Bench, sometimes for almost a whole day, in charge of an under-secretary. Any intelligent foreigner visiting the House of Commons during these weeks could have imagined that we had already adopted the Continental system, and that the executive had no longer seats in the Legislature.

This resentment by the Government at discussion and criticism continued all through this session. Even questions on the great issues of public policy were deprecated. For weeks on end the mildest request for information from Mr. Thomas on Ireland was regarded as being in the worst possible taste, and if a member, greatly daring, ventured a little mild heckling of Sir John Simon on disarmament, he was answered as if his questions were likely to cause a European War. At times I felt inclined to shout out, "This is London, not Berlin."

Then there was grave weakness in leadership. Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd, Mr. Baldwin's parliamentary private secretary, who, as mover of the address of thanks for the Gracious Speech in November 1931, was the first to catch the Speaker's eye in the new Parliament, had pinned down the prevailing mood of the people in his phrase: "The country wants to feel the firm hand of a ruler." It was that which produced the Brown Shirts in Germany and President Roosevelt in the United

States. In England it took the milder form of five hundred supporters of a National Government.

But with one or two exceptions, notably Mr. Walter Elliot and Mr. Runciman, this feeling has not found much expression in the Treasury Bench. There were two glaring instances of vagueness and indecision that session. There was first of all the Prime Minister. Early in November 1932 he had a great chance. There was a three days' debate on unemployment. It was in response to a request from the Opposition that, since the position was so serious, the House ought to go into committee, as it used to do in the old days in time of crisis, "on the general state of the nation." With this object in view, a motion was tabled without any of the usual acid adjectives of criticism. It read as follows on the Order Paper :

"That this House views with concern the present volume of unemployment, and will welcome all proper measures for dealing with it. (Mr. Lansbury.)"

The *pièce de résistance* was naturally a speech from the Prime Minister expounding, not merely the details, but the philosophy, of the Government's policy for unemployment. I cannot believe that any Prime Minister has made a more lamentable speech on an important occasion. At times it was quite unintelligible. I extract a quotation from Hansard. Ordinarily it would be unfair, because even Cabinet Ministers may lose the thread of their sentences. But in this speech it was almost a surprise if he brought any sentence to its logical end. This was his definition of how the problem was to be tackled :

"Schemes must be devised, policies must be devised if it is humanely possible to take that section (i.e. those unemployed who are unlikely shortly to be reabsorbed into industry) and to regard them not as wastrels, not as hopeless people, but as people for whom occupation must be provided, somehow or other, and that occupation,

although it may not be in the regular factory or in organised large-scale industrial groups, nevertheless will be quite as effective for themselves mentally, morally, spiritually and physically than, perhaps, if they were included in this enormous mechanism of humanity, which is not always producing the best result, and which, to a very large extent, fails in producing the good results that so many of us expect to see from a higher civilisation based upon national wealth. That is the problem that has got to be faced."

As the speech of a Prime Minister on an important occasion it must have been unique. For on at least two occasions Mr. MacDonald expressly stated that he was not speaking for the Government. I saw Conservative members all around me gazing up to the lighted roof in despair. With the memories of all that I had seen and heard in Germany, I could not help feeling that with a few more speeches like these the shadows of dictatorship would lengthen.

The second occasion for alarm and despondency was provided by Mr. Baldwin. It was on a Foreign Office debate, and the theme was the total abolition of all air forces. There was no lack of rhetoric, nor was there any confusion of thought here. It read like some great speech in Greek tragedy. The terrible suggestion running all through it was that man may be in the grip of forces which he cannot control, which will compel him to use the mighty weapons of science to no better purpose but his own destruction. The prosaic atmosphere of the House of Commons became positively macabre, when he described the existence of some instruments so terrible that mankind has resolved not to use them. "I myself happen to know," he added, "of at least three inventions, deliberately proposed in the last war, that were never used—potent to a degree, inhuman. If the consciences of the young men should ever come to feel with regard to this one instrument of the air that it is evil and should go, the thing will be done; but if they do not feel like that—well, as I say, the future is in their hands. But

when the next war comes and European civilisation is wiped out, as it will be, and by no force more than that force, then do not let them lay the blame on the old men. Let them remember that they, they principally, or they alone, are responsible for the terrors that have fallen upon the earth."

The general verdict as we trooped through the lobbies was that it was one of Mr. Baldwin's greatest speeches. I could not agree with it. It seemed to me to typify the inherent danger in the National Government of waiting on events instead of controlling them, the substitution of fatalism for energising enthusiasm. It is not the business of a Government to wait for a lead from youth. Its business is to give a lead to youth. Mr. Baldwin appealed as the leader of the House of Commons as from age to youth to do something. It is the abdication of Government. One day some young man may respond, and he will come, not in the parliamentary uniform of a black coat and striped trousers, but in breeches and a black shirt. If he succeeds it will be because the National Government has failed.

The events of that session taught me that the political interest is still concentrated on the great figures of Parliament. But it made me wonder whether those great figures can satisfy its aspirations.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### HAS YOUTH MISSED ITS CHANCE?

**N**OT THAT I THINK for a moment that in such a failure the young men can escape their share of the blame.

The loudest cry in the post-war world has been that youth has not been given its chance. It cannot be said of the present Government. The dominant impression that any visitor to the House of Commons retains is of hordes of young men, earnest, well groomed, and all speaking with the accents of the four greater public schools. There are more men under thirty-five in the present Parliament than in any within the memory of man. So far as getting into the House of Commons is concerned, youth has certainly had its chance in politics. What is interesting to study is whether it is taking it. More than two years have gone by since the National tide swept us to Westminster, some of us astounded that we were there at all—one young man has since naïvely admitted to his constituents that he only stood because he thought he would never be elected—all of us bewildered at our majorities. The maiden speeches are over now. The bunch at the first hurdle has thinned out, and it is possible to see who are likely to forge ahead. It is strange how scanty is the field.

Admittedly it is an unprofitable business, spotting future Prime Ministers. They spring from the circumstances of the time far more than their speeches and records of the past. In 1903 the favourites for the next Liberal Premiership were Asquith, Grey, and Haldane. But it was the lonely and apparently insignificant Campbell Bannerman who led the party in 1905 to the greatest victory in its history. In the years before the war there was a pleasant-faced, elderly young man who sat for Bewdley. He made no mark on the back benches ; he attracted no attention in minor offices either in the Government or even when he was elevated to

the Cabinet. Mr. Lloyd George says of him that when, as Prime Minister, he used to go round the Cabinet asking for opinions on some great question of the day—"Chancellor, what have you to say? Home Secretary, what is your opinion?" when he came to Mr. Baldwin, "I cannot recall that he ever made one single suggestion of any kind." For all that, Mr. Baldwin played a major part in overthrowing the Coalition and has twice led the Tory Party to overwhelming victory.

At the same time, it is a little disturbing that there is not a single young man among the new members whose rising to speak, when it is announced on the indicators of the smoking-room, the library, or the dining-room, creates, except among his friends, an exodus to go and hear him.

One reason is that we are as yet too timid. We are cursed with the public-school code of obedience to our betters. "The Minister says it is so-and-so, and who am I to contradict him?"—that is the prevailing mentality. I remember being sharply pulled up in the first few months of this Parliament by a senior member for some criticisms I had seen fit to make of a Cabinet Minister. Looking back upon them, they were rather irreverent and irresponsible. But the fury they created seemed out of all proportion to my offence. "Who are you to attack ——?" I was indignantly asked. "You have not been here six months." It was said in exactly the tone of voice in which small boys, greatly daring, are spoken to in their school debating societies, and are reminded, sometimes with a rackets handle, that they have not yet even got a place in the "Under 17 House Rugger Side."

This public-school outlook takes extraordinary forms sometimes. There was one young man whom the Conservative Party was most anxious should not be returned to the House of Commons. They were even threatening to put up a candidate against him if he secured the nomination of the local executive. "What has —— done," I asked a young Conservative member, "that you dislike him so much? Has he committed some crime or other? Has he shot a fox?"



My poor little attempt at a joke got no response. "I do not know," my friend gravely replied, "whether he has actually shot a fox. But you ought to see one of his partridge shoots. It is not a shoot, but a massacre." I replied that I entirely understood why the Conservative Party in those circumstances did not want him elected to the House of Commons. But the irony was quite lost on him.

But that kind of mentality, amusing though it is, has had a bad effect on the vitality of this Parliament. Question-time tends to become the affair of the older men. Even they have to conform to the primitive code of dress and manners if they are to win our interest and respect.

"You know, I do not care for Horne much," a Conservative said to me once. "It may be stupid and snobbish of me, but I cannot get over the way he wears brown boots with a blue suit." Sir Robert Horne is one of the most formidable representatives of big business in the House and is an ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Question-time, usually the most vital hour in a parliamentary day, is rather a dreary business now. Indeed, we hardly dare put down questions at all. It is quite an event when question-time extends its full allotted hour. If there is a revolt against a Government Bill, such as the London Traffic Bill, it is never the young man who takes the lead. The adjournment motion every night provides obvious opportunities for members to raise legitimate grievances. I could count on the fingers of one hand the young members who have taken advantage of it.

Yet for the cut and thrust of parliamentary debate we ought to be admirably equipped. None of us has any excuse for the inferiority complex which makes the change from the sweeping orations of the street-corner to subtle debating points in committee such a terrible ordeal to many new Labour members. One of them said to me once, "We appear to you aggressive and arrogant, but you have no idea how shy we really are. Do you know that when I first came into this House from a mining constituency I had never met on terms of equality any man who had been to Oxford?"

But many of us have already crossed swords with one another in University debating societies. There are no fewer than thirteen ex-presidents of the Oxford Union in the present House of Commons.

No doubt many excuses can be made. A large proportion of us, in addition to our parliamentary work, have to earn our own living. The Labour members cannot afford secretaries, but most of them, if they are so disposed, can make their parliamentary duties a whole-time job. It is very difficult for some of us to give the minute attention to the points of procedure and the intricate details of a Parliamentary Bill which alone can make the complete parliamentary swordsman. Moreover, the great questions of the day—debts, currency problems, disarmament—unlike the old dividing questions of Home Rule, or the House of Lords, or land taxes, are necessarily fought out at international conferences. There is something in the point that the problems of to-day are so vast that they dwarf even the parliamentary giants.

Then there are the peculiar conditions of this Parliament that do not give the opportunity to the back-bench supporters of the Government. There are few debates in which the case of the Opposition is put so strongly that it inspires a young man with a burning desire to answer it. It is naturally the business of the Government Whips to discourage loquacity on their own side. Their job is to see that the Government programme goes through as smoothly and quickly as is possible. All the great parliamentary reputations have been made in Opposition. It was in the last charge of the old guard of country gentlemen against the repeal of the Corn Laws that Disraeli made his name. It was when the Conservative Government of 1900 was tottering to its fall that Winston Churchill leapt into fame as the spear-head of the Liberal attack. There are not those opportunities now.

Then there is a further obstacle to the establishment of a back-bench reputation, and that is the conditions of reporting in the popular Press. When I read attacks by journalists,

quite ignorant of the conditions of Parliament, on the flabbiness of the young politician, I wonder what would be the fate of the "impudent," "daring," "slashing" attacks on our leaders that they are always trying to sting us into making. They would either not be reported at all, or cut down to two lines. I remember once, years ago, making what I thought was a devastating attack on the Conservative Party at the Oxford Union. All that appeared in the *Morning Post*, which was reporting the debate, was : "Mr. Bernays (ex-President, Worcester) said that Mr. Baldwin was a cuckoo."

All the same, even on the day-to-day questions in the House of Commons there is lamentably little evidence of independence of thought. Perhaps the conditions of the last election are to blame. So many members were spared the gruelling apprenticeship to public life which prolonged candidature in hopeless seats provides. We tend to adopt *in toto* the party view on all questions because we have not had the experience to enable us to form any other. Where there is independence of view there is the greatest reluctance to break from the pack. Rebel views seldom extend beyond the smoking-room. A member will put down an amendment, make a convincing speech in its support, and then respond to the appeal of the Government spokesman to withdraw it, and, when the Opposition refuse leave and it goes into a division, will vote against it. Inside the chamber all is uniformity and good form. Woe betide the young man who speaks when the rest of his party wants to go home. He will be made to feel for days after, by pained ostracism, the enormity of his offence. There are hardly half a dozen young members of any party, Liberal and Labour as well as Conservative, who say the same thing inside the chamber as they do out of it. If they do, particularly in the Conservative Party, they will be marked men. In the old days it was the men who made themselves troublesome who were quieted with an under-secretaryship. The practice had its drawbacks. But at least it ensured that those who achieved office had served a real apprenticeship to Parliament, speaking in the

dinner-hour and making exhaustive searches into Blue Books and White Papers. Now office tends to go to "the nice boys" who have made three competent, innocuous orations about "The Need for Unity in the Hour of National Danger."

Most of the pressure that has been exerted on the Government has been in the direction of making it more Conservative. There has not been nearly enough compensatory pressure on the other side to keep it National. There is no Randolph Churchill bearding Sir Stafford Northcote and instructing him to get on with the job, or give way to those who can. It is not for the lack of Sir Stafford Northcotes.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### PUT IN THE SECOND ELEVEN

**B**UT IF THE POST-WAR GENERATION is missing its chance, that is not true of the war generation itself—or such of it as has survived. The outstanding feature of this Parliament has been the success of the under-secretaries. They have seized their opportunities with both hands. Whatever may be the deficiencies of those in their late twenties, there is no lack of ability and drive about those in their late thirties. They are probably as good as anything which even that Government of Mr. Asquith, the most brilliant perhaps in modern history, has produced.

There is Anthony Eden, who was Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs up to the beginning of 1934. He is that rare combination—a success at Geneva and a success in a Tory House of Commons. He radiates confidence. Perhaps it is his aristocratic appearance and immaculate clothes. At Geneva they think that he is the classic tradition of British statesmanship, and at Westminster even the hard-shelled Tories, when they hear him speak, begin to think that disarmament is almost respectable. He has the gift of direct and candid statement which is particularly refreshing after some of the pronouncements on foreign affairs by the old gang. He has also the achievement—so dear to the heart of the British public—of having at one time or another digested a vast mass of useless knowledge. At Oxford, when others were reading history and economics and agriculture and philosophy, he read Persian. He was the only one who did. As a prelude to a political career it is all in the best amateur tradition.

He is now Lord Privy Seal, with special charge of League affairs. I do not know what the foreign statesmen will make of the new title. I can see them rummaging in their dictionaries to find out what is the exact meaning of “Privy,” and

being very puzzled by it all. But in the race for the next Tory Premiership but one he is in the first three.

Then there is Oliver Stanley, the brightest of the group contemptuously given by the die-hards the title of the Y.M.C.A., who made a considerable mark in the 1924 Parliament. A real social reformer, he might well have thrown in his lot with the Liberals if the days when they could command overwhelming support and influence in the country and Parliament were with us now. He is one of the few men who attempts oratory in these prosaic days and brings it off. His peroration introducing the Sunday Performances Regulation Bill was one of the finest passages of quiet but intensely effective rhetoric that I have heard in Parliament. It is really worth digging out of the obscurity of Hansard. He was answering the argument that the opening of the Sunday cinema would destroy the sanctity of the Sunday rest, and he appealed to the House to face the facts. To most Hon. Members a Sunday at home meant "comfortable surroundings, complete privacy, every aid to intellectual enjoyment. . . . But are there not many thousands of people in this country to whom the Sunday at home does not mean that—to whom it may mean a continuance of the terrible intimacy of overcrowded houses, of the round of household drudgery from which we are exempt, of the drab surroundings which they see every day of their lives, and to whom a visit to the cinema, however meretricious it may be, means at least privacy, warmth, colour, life? And if those people go to the cinema on Sunday evening, I, for one, will not admit that Christianity condemns their action until I am sure that Christianity approves their conditions."

With less obvious gifts, but quite as competent, is Malcolm MacDonald. I knew him at the Oxford Union when we were both undergraduates. Then he was a perfervid Socialist, and he looked upon me as a mild bourgeois Liberal who would be driven by the logic of events into the arms of the Conservative Central Office. When we finally met, seven years afterwards, in the House of Commons, he had left the Socialist Party and I was still with the

Liberals. But, to do him justice, nobody would accuse Malcolm of being a Conservative. He is a first-class representative of that type of thoroughgoing Radical who found it impossible to work with the Labour Party. Because he is so patently honest, he has performed the miracle of acquiring the affection of his new friends without losing the respect of his old ones.

Of all the renegades, he is the one whom the Socialist Party least resent. That is why he is such an asset to the National Government. I am told that in the recent Market Harborough by-election his visit was such a success that earnest requests were made that he should repeat it on the eve of the poll—a rare compliment to an under-secretary. He is one of the few Ministers who can turn non-Conservative votes for the National Government.

A wholly different type is Leslie Hore-Belisha. As Sir Herbert Samuel rather acidly remarked in the House of Commons, "If my Hon. Friend the Financial Secretary of the Treasury is not flamboyant, he is nothing." He has confessed to modelling himself on Disraeli, and recently made an unwise speech in his constituency on his chances for the Premiership. In life, if you want something, there is no greater mistake than indicating that you want it. Immediately you create a formidable combination determined to prevent you from getting it. In no sphere is this more true than in politics. I have no doubt that Mr. Baldwin's frequent assertions that he prefers the smell of the lanes of Worcestershire to the dust and intrigue of politics is genuine; it is also one of his greatest electoral assets. But, in spite of the handicap of appearing over-ambitious, Hore-Belisha is extremely able, and a great political tactician. I would rather hear him wind up a debate than any man in the Cabinet except Mr. Baldwin.

The list of promising under-secretaries is endless. Robert Hudson, Under-Secretary for Labour, is another of them. He is one of the few men at the Ministry of Labour, Socialist or Tory or Coalition Liberal, since the war, who does not regard unemployment as being a question of how to make the best electioneering case for the current month's

figures of unemployment. He does give the definite impression that the problem is more than the negotiation of the next awkward corner. Shakespeare has done conspicuously well at the Ministry of Health. If the slums are not cleared by the recent Housing Act, it will be the fault of the Act and not any lack of driving-force and enthusiasm on his part.

Why are not more of these young men in the Cabinet? "This post-war world," said Mr. Baldwin, in a recent India debate, "is full of pre-war minds." Then why does he share the responsibility with the Premier for having appointed a Cabinet almost exclusively of "pre-war minds"? It is a question—rather impudent though it may be for a young man to ask it—which has frequently suggested itself to me when I have heard the under-secretaries at Westminster time and again, in arresting contra-distinction to the painstaking contributions of their chiefs, scoring merrily all round the wicket.

I fully appreciate the motives which inspired the pre-war statesmen to remain at their posts when the guns ceased. Mr. Baldwin has stated them in a characteristically moving speech. Speaking of the men "who were middle-aged already when the war began," he said, "It has become our lot, not to seek the ease, but to carry on to the end, and help the next generation that is coming along—the generation that was too young to fight—help that to take its place as and when the time comes." The date of that speech was March 1925. It certainly accurately represented the situation then. We were suffering from a lost generation. The men who, in their late thirties and early forties, were the driving-force of Governments in the days before the war were, almost to a man, wiped out in the furnace of the Western Front. So the men who were in the seats of power in 1914 remained there in 1925, and rightly remained there.

But that was eight years ago. Have they the same justification now? The young men who were in their late teens and early twenties when the war stopped, and who saw perhaps two or three years of active service, are now in their middle



thirties or early forties. Whatever may be the deficiencies of those of us who were brought up only in the shadow of the war, they do not apply to those who saw active service in it. It must be peculiarly exasperating for them to see so many of the men who took us into the last war still at the helm while the world drifts into the next. Surely the time has come when those who were a wall unto the old world, "so that we were not hurt," might be allowed a more impressive share in the shaping of the new.

It is absurd to go on prating that these men are so young. It is quite a post-war idea that none under forty-five should be in charge of a great department of State. Sir Austen Chamberlain was barely forty when he became Chancellor of the Exchequer the year after I was born; Sir John Simon was thirty-seven when he was made Solicitor-General. Mr. Winston Churchill was only thirty-four when he was Home Secretary. Yet to-day a man of the calibre of Hudson, who is now forty-six, is regarded as a young man only fit for a subordinate post. A great commotion has been made over the appointment of so young a man as Anthony Eden to the office of Lord Privy Seal. But he is thirty-six, and, in spite of his remarkable success, is still outside the Cabinet. Geoffrey Shakespeare is forty, and Oliver Stanley is thirty-seven.

In the face of those statistics, all this talk of the old men of holding on to the torch at great personal sacrifice to themselves, until the young men are able to take it from their eager hands, is really rather overdone.

I should like to see the second eleven sent in to bat. Obviously there would have to be some qualifications in such a drastic proposal. Men like Walter Elliott would be included on the score of youth. He is only forty-four. In any case, it is less than a year since he was an under-secretary himself. Then Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, is far too capable an administrator and manager of a most difficult situation to be superseded. Mr. Baldwin would also have to remain. It is true that he is sixty-six, but he is still an immense cementing influence in the House of

Commons, and retains in a remarkable degree the power of interpreting the best elements in the Conservative creed. Apart from these obvious exceptions, I would like to see the young men move up *en bloc* into the seats of the mighty.

It may be argued that it would be very unfair on the older men suddenly, after years of devoted service, to find themselves relegated to the back benches. But in what other profession are men, however distinguished, permitted to remain at the top after sixty? It is the retiring age, after all, for Civil Servants, who have an infinitely less exacting life than that of politicians. Ship's captains, with whom statesmen never grow weary of comparing themselves, retire at sixty-five. Even among dons at Oxford and Cambridge, whose lot is cast in peculiarly pleasant places, far from the tumult and turmoil of the hustings, a retiring-age has been introduced and is now strictly observed.

It is a commonplace of medical science that round about seventy the brain begins to lose its incisiveness, and there is a growing lack of adaptability to new ideas. Yet, in a profession that above all else needs youthful minds and the capacity to grapple instantly with new situations, the whiter the head, the higher the office.

I fully admit that there is greater need in politics than elsewhere for the judgment that comes with life-long experience. For that reason I do not propose a retiring age for members of Parliament. All I suggest is the removal of those in the region of seventy from the control of departments on the front bench to positions of "more freedom and greater responsibility" on the back benches. Let them pontificate from their corner seats below the gangway on Government or Opposition side; let them tell us with gesticulating forefinger what happened when the Liberal Unionists split from Gladstone, or how the precedent of the Irish Party helps us in our present difficulty; let them give advice by the paragraph and grave warnings by the Hansard column. We will listen to them with interest and respect, and they will make their contributions with very real advantage to the State.

Sir Austen Chamberlain is a remarkable case in point. He

will be seventy-one next October, and when, at his own request, on the score of age, he retired from the Government to the corner seat on the third bench below the gangway on the Government side, the cyrie made famous by his father, it was felt that his active career was over. Instead, he has emerged as the outstanding figure in this House of Commons. His speeches have had the deepest effect on present Government policy.

I recall particularly the one at the beginning of the session in which he electrified a complacent Minister of Health by declaring himself "profoundly disappointed" with his measures for dealing with the slum problem. His description of the housing conditions in West Birmingham was extraordinarily vivid. It could not have been studied, for he spoke without a note. "In house after house the tenant will show you a cracked copper, show you a door which he has to prop to and fasten with a chair at night because it is hanging loose upon its hinges. You will see that all the brickwork ought to have been repointed. You will see the paper peeling off the walls—paper which the tenant has put on out of his own money—because the walls so reek with damp that no paper will stay there. You go up into a bedroom, and you see a bed propped up on the tops of packing-cases, because if the castors of the bedstead were left upon the planking of the floor they would go through, so rotten are the planks. Those are the houses of a large number of my constituents." He hardly spoke for a quarter of an hour, but he said enough to induce the Government to alter the whole scope of the Bill. The opportunities of "elder statesmanship" are enormous, if only they are made from outside the Government and not in it. Yet Sir Austen Chamberlain, alone of the elder statesmen, has of his own free will made room for the younger men.

It is quite as much true of the Opposition as of the Government. The Labour Party, that claims to be the fighting expression of ardent youth, is led by a youngster of seventy-four. Mr. Arthur Henderson, who was Labour's last Foreign Secretary and may be its next Prime Minister, is seventy. While its young men eat their hearts out fighting hopeless

seats in suburban constituencies and semi-rural areas, its front bench is occupied almost exclusively by rapidly ageing trade union secretaries ; its safe seats are rewards for past successes on the industrial side of the moment, not for future Privy Councillors.

Yet particularly at this moment is the elevation of youth important. The world is changing so quickly that men steeped in the politics of 1913 are, as Mr. Baldwin suggested, for that very reason handicapped in approaching the problems of 1934. A Cabinet whose average age was forty, instead of, as at present, nearly sixty, would not merely be stronger in ability and debating talent ; it would also have an infinitely greater right to call itself "National." It would certainly give the Opposition parties far less opportunity to dispute the title.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### WHERE FARMING PAYS

**T**HE MAJOR BILL for the spring session of 1933 was a pig quota Bill. I resolved to snatch ten days of the Christmas recess in visiting the country from which ninety per cent of the pigs had, up to then, been imported. So, with Major Crawford<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Holdsworth,<sup>2</sup> I set off for Denmark, to study the sad progress of the pig from the sty to the English breakfast-table.

It involved a horrible crossing of the North Sea in January—bitterly cold wind and a howling gale. The ship was like the stage setting of *Outward Bound*. There were less than a dozen passengers, and the greater part of the deck was shrouded in darkness. It was extraordinarily eerie. The captain was a glorious old Viking who had done the trip sixteen hundred times, many of them in peril of submarines and mines when they had to navigate half round Scotland in order to reach Hull.

In Denmark we found the greatest alarm and despondency. The threat of restrictions on their bacon imports cut at the vitals of their prosperity. Though a Free Trader, I could not help feeling that for the coming pig quota they had very largely themselves to thank. They were blind to the signs of the times. For years there had been an adverse balance of trade between the two countries. There is no doubt that a great deal of nonsense is talked about an adverse balance of trade between two countries. It is not just the question of exchanging the products of one country for that of another. Trade is three-, four- and five-cornered, and there is much in the argument that any apparent adverse balance between countries like Denmark and Great Britain is made up by, say, Denmark's trade with Germany

<sup>1</sup> Major Crawford, formerly Liberal member for Walthamstow.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Holdsworth, Liberal member for Bradford.

and Germany's trade with Brazil, and, finally, Brazil's trade with Great Britain. But this argument has to some extent broken down in the slump. The poverty of Germany and the bankruptcy of Brazil have snapped the links. This was never realised, or realised too late, by the Danes. They still thought that England would consent indefinitely to have her markets flooded by agricultural imports without sufficient compensating outlet for the exports of Manchester and Bradford. The difficulty of Free Traders in England has been that they have had so little support from the countries that stood most to gain from the continuance of her system of free imports.

Now Denmark is in a really serious position. About the 'eighties of the last century she made up her mind to go in for co-operative marketing. That is the secret of her ability to supply cheap bacon, and the extraordinary prosperity of her agriculture.

I was aware of this prosperity even as the landscape unfolded itself to me outside the carriage window as I made the eight-hour journey from Esbjerg to Copenhagen. It is like the illustrated cover of a book on model farming—whitewashed cottages, and fields so green that they scarcely look real, and cows that seem to have stepped straight out of an advertisement for tinned milk, and small-holders looking as gay as if they had been dressed for the part by Clarkson's.

Once we began our tour, I realised the reason. It is organisation that has done it. In Denmark there are some 220,000 farmers and small-holders. All but a negligible number of them sell their produce through the agency of eighty bacon factories. An even larger proportion dispose of their milk to co-operative creameries. Indeed there is no independent sale of milk in Denmark at all.

There is little risk of a farmer, having once entered into a contract with a co-operative factory, suddenly breaking it in order that he may get a better price with a private firm, for his guarantee has the force of law behind it. It has also the solid foundation of a monetary transaction. For the

capital for a bacon factory is guaranteed by the farmers, each according to the amount of land that he holds. Even the temptation of the farmer to hold up or anticipate his weekly supply of pigs has been taken away. Each pig is required to weigh not less than sixty-five kilos or more than seventy kilos. If it does not come up to expectation, the farmer is fined. The result is that pigs hanging on the line at any bacon factory are as uniform as a row of mass-production motor-cars. Indeed the popular phrase of comparison in Denmark ought to be "as like as two pigs."

Nor is there a danger of exploitation of the farmer by the factory. Any profits that the factory makes are distributed in the form of bonus at the end of each year.

The farmer is thus assured of a stable market for his products—perhaps the most important element in any commercial enterprise. He knows exactly how many pigs he can sell, and what will be the price for them, and, moreover, that he will get it the very day after he delivers them.

Compare this with the haphazard way in which the English farmer drives his pigs to market, not knowing in the least what price he will get for them, or, indeed, if he will be able to sell them at all.

The system produces in the farmer a far greater standard of efficiency than in England. The working of a farm in Denmark is an exact science. Just enough cows, for example, will be kept to provide the pigs with skimmed milk, which, in contradistinction to "the swill" in England, is the staple diet of the pigs there, and the amount of acres of plough-land will be precisely regulated by the extent of the feeding-stuffs necessary for the cows.

The most elaborate precautions are taken to ensure that the pigs and cows will be of the right weight and conditions of health. Pigs are not allowed out of their sties, lest exercise should make them too tough, and cows, when turned out to grass, are tethered together in a line, lest, if they were allowed to stray about the field, they might eat too much and so damage the quality of the milk.

Cow-sheds are as clean and airy as hunting-stables in

England. In the smallest holding every stall will be labelled with the pedigree of the cow, "the butter capacity" of its milk, and the date of its last calf. Accounts are kept to the minutest detail. By the light of an oil-lamp in a small-holder's cottage I was shown accounts as elaborate as those of a manager of a multiple store.

There is about every side of Danish farming an atmosphere of invigorating efficiency. The buildings all look as if they had been newly whitewashed ; there are no rotting gates or old ploughs rusting in the winter rains. It all seemed indicative of the modernity of Danish agriculture that one farmer put on goloshes over his boots before taking us over the farm buildings.

A further factor in prosperity is the multiplicity of small-holdings. The whole horizon of the countryside is radically different from the English shires.

Instead of a few villages clustering round two or three big farmhouses, the landscape is dotted with small-scale farms. Some consist of only two buildings facing one another, the cottage on one side, and the piggery and cow-shed on the other. As a man prospers, he adds to them, filling up first one side and then the other until the whole forms a square.

Most of the great estates are now broken up, and a great many of the labourers who worked upon them are owners themselves. The ladder of advancement is not very difficult to scale. All that is required is a savings account of £300. Up to the depression it was £150. The State then makes up the amount to £1,000, which is sufficient to launch successfully a small-holding.

Admittedly there remains a substantial number of landless labourers, but for the most part they are in that status by their own choice. This tremendous development of the small-holding system has secured that there is no waste land. Every available acre is harnessed to production.

But though the independence, contentment, and prosperity of the agricultural population of Denmark are very impressive, I do not think they are founded on anything



that could not be furnished in England. It is merely that agriculture has been rationalised. The English country gentleman who runs a farm in the intervals of hunting the fox has no prototype in Denmark. There is something significant in the fact that even the pigs are driven to their deaths in a motor-car. It is the application to agriculture of all the resources of the twentieth century.

How long will it take to organise in this country? And what will happen to the unfortunate men and women in the back streets of the industrial towns to whom bacon is a staple item of diet? Two can play at the game of restriction. If there is control of imports, there will also be control of supplies to keep the price up. The Danish co-operative factories, with their experts studying the market in England, can gauge almost exactly the demand in six months time. Calculations are then made on their reports, and the managers of the factories ring up their farmers on the telephone and tell them precisely how many pigs and gallons of milk they will want in a given month. The farmers then breed their pigs, or arrange their calvings, accordingly.

Even at this stage I saw rows of empty pig-sties. News of Mr. Elliott's intention had been flashed by the superb agricultural organisation to the remotest pig-sty in Denmark. A drastic birth control was already in existence. At the same time there was a flood of Polish imports of cheap suits that used to come from Bradford.

It was another instance of the tragic trend of human relationships. Here was a country adapted by climate, and years of intensive research, to supply cheap bacon to a country well adapted to the manufacture of woollen goods. Economic nationalism gets control, and the British working man gets expensive bacon, or cannot afford any bacon at all, and the Danish working man has shoddy clothes.

What an insane world! The empty pig-sties were the Danish counter-part of the blazing coffee in Brazil.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### DENMARK'S BRAVE NEW WORLD

**B**UT A PART from economic difficulties, Denmark is a country without a problem. To the traveller it is a unique experience.

In the last two years I have been round the world, and at every stopping-place I was haunted and pursued by a problem.

In Quebec it was the French-Canadian, magnificently maintaining his cultural independence, though it is nearly two hundred years since Wolfe died ; happy when someone, alluding to the French, remarked " See how they run." In the Rockies it was the Red Indian, growing soft and corrupt on his reservation.

In the steaming heat of the South Seas I did not escape it, for even as I tried to manipulate a surf-boat I had to listen to hair-raising stories of Japanese penetration.

In Australia it was the plight of the settlers. In India I ate and drank colour problems from my morning cup of tea to my last *chota peg*.

I returned to Europe, and the problems only increased in size and terror. I landed in Venice, and it was the menace of Jugo-Slavia. I crossed into Germany, and it was the peril of Polish aeroplanes swooping upon the defenceless inhabitants. I flew into Poland, only to hear frightening stories of German re-armament.

Wherever I went, one country wanted something that it had not got, or feared the capture of something it now possessed, or was cursed with a tiresome minority who wanted to be ruled by someone else.

Then I went to Denmark, and at last I found peace. For Denmark is a country without a problem.

Incredible to relate Denmark has no national ambitions. She does not dream of *revanche*. There is no Denmark

*irredenta*. Indeed, she was positively frightened when it was proposed to restore to her at Versailles the provinces of Schleswig-Holstein, stolen from her by Germany in 1864. She feared that she might be creating within her own borders an *irredenta* for somebody else. However, a plebiscite settled the matter. The part that voted to remain with Germany remained with Germany ; the part that voted for restoration to Denmark was restored to Denmark.

There was none of the intimidation and manipulation that characterised plebiscites elsewhere. Denmark was determined to have no minority problem, and the result is that the decision, even though it is now being challenged by the usual noisy Nazi propaganda, is perhaps the most durable part of the whole Versailles settlement.

Yet the memory of the war of 1864, when Bismarck swooped down upon the provinces of Schleswig-Holstein, is still poignant. Their partial restoration under the Treaty of Versailles has not entirely blotted it out. One of the reasons for the eagerness to trade with Britain is a reluctance to do business with Germany. Tin soldiers are, of course, a popular toy in Denmark, and parents tell me that in the great battles of the nursery it is the Germans who are always the enemy. One young parent told me that he did his best to prevent this by never mentioning before his children the war of 1864. But it was no use. As soon as his children were of age they were playing "Germans and Danes" as merrily as if their father was a burning nationalist. It is a melancholy expression of the need in every normal human being for something to hate, and of the dismal failure of any self-conscious effort to eradicate it.

The Danish attitude on international affairs is admirably realist. I could not talk to a Danish politician without hearing it. It was at once deprecating, humorous, disarming, and appealing. Every after-dinner speech is salted with jokes about the days when the Danes "worried and harried—and married the English."

But the animosities have been buried under centuries of friendly association. Even the regrettable episode of the

sinking of the Danish fleet by Nelson, without the formality of a declaration of war, as it rode peacefully at anchor in Copenhagen, is forgiven if not forgotten.

The traveller gets a sense of peace the moment that he lands at Esbjerg. For one thing, there are no posters on the railway stations. Then the journey itself to Copenhagen is so smooth and unhurried, even though it is necessary to cross two stretches of water, in both cases considerably wider than from Portsmouth to Ryde. The train makes no more trouble about it than it does passing over the Scottish border. The passengers do not even have to get out. The train is shunted into the hold of the steamer by means of a bridge than can be regulated up and down, according to the tide, and is transported in its entirety from one island to another. I was not aware of the motion of the water. I was half way across before I realised that I had left firm earth—and even then it was only the alteration in the rhythm of the engine that told me what had happened.

Copenhagen has the appearance of a toy town. Its harbour is pure Hans Andersen, full of tall ships that have the smack of fabulous adventure about them in every line of their long, tapering masts. The docks are clean and bright and cobbled. Even the dock labourers look different from those in other towns. They are Vikings—fair-haired, with massive chests, and eyes that may have never looked beyond the tavern round the corner, but which, nevertheless, have the appearance of having gazed on each one of the seven seas.

The streets themselves have lost something of the drabness of the twentieth century. There is a new colour about them—the postmen wear red tunics, rather like the English guardsmen, and the royal bodyguard are incredibly smart in all the glory of the Napoleonic uniforms. The most popular mode of transport is the push-bicycle. There are, of course, taxis and trams and private cars, but I have not seen so many bicycles since, as a small boy, I visited Oxford in 1913. All day long they sweep down the main streets in great droves, as gay and irresponsible as a cycling club on a Bank Holiday excursion.

There is romance even on the motor-roads. It was just after Christmas when I was in Copenhagen, and I was puzzled to see on the trees lining one of the main arteries out of Copenhagen bundles of corn in the bare branches. They were the householders' Christmas gift to the birds. Underneath them, eight-cylinder cars glide along macadamised roads, but the pleasant customs of a primitive seafaring people remain. It is not for nothing that Denmark was the nursery of the fairy-tale. When I was there, every house had its Christmas-tree, even though it was lit more often by candle-power than by candles.

Nor is the appearance of kindness and simplicity bogus. I have known in my travels smiling valleys and old-world quaintness sheltering hideous oppressions. It is not so in Denmark. It is the best-run country I have seen. Country life is really life in the country. In the villages there are no petrol-pumps, or week-end bungalows, or "Tudor" dance-halls. When a farm hand becomes a farmer, there is really no change either of labour or of status. The travelling cinema has not reached the Danish village. This is the more remarkable since in the towns the Danes are tremendous "movie fans," and in Copenhagen the picture-houses themselves are architecturally as fine as anything I have seen outside Berlin.

For all the up-to-date methods of Danish agriculture, the life of the peasant is simple, not to say primitive. He will still milk the cow and feed the pigs, and, in addition, have to keep accounts as elaborate as in retail trade. Indeed, where the farmer is a tenant of the State he will be dispossessed of his farm if he farms badly. As a matter of fact, however, less than one per cent of the farmers are tenants. The overwhelming majority own their own farms.

The position of the peasant is typical of Denmark as a whole. There are actually no class distinctions. The idea that one man is as good as another is not an aggressive pose. It is a real article of belief. I have seen the master of the work-house touch his hat to the old man leaning on the wheelbarrow, and the baroness's daughter curtsy to the postman. There was no affectation ; it was just genuine friendliness.

Denmark is the best example I know of the social benefits that come from everybody going to the same school.

This atmosphere of good fellowship is admirably reflected in the Royal Family. They actually have their telephone numbers in the directory. King Christian is in a very real sense "a citizen king." He must be the most democratic royalty in Europe. He can be seen any day walking in the park, looking in at the shop windows over the heads of his subjects—for he is six foot six inches in height—skating on the lakes that are the playground of Copenhagen in winter. There are no guards about him. He might speak with perfect truth of "the common people, of whom I am the chief." Recently he was seen listening at the street-corner to a Socialist meeting. The crowd was not in the least embarrassed. They just took off their hats and carried on.

Imagine the Prince of Wales, in a private soldier's uniform, doing duty outside Buckingham Palace. The idea is ludicrous ; but not so in Denmark. King Christian, as Crown Prince, began his military duties by acting as one of the guard outside his father's palace.

Poverty, of course, exists to some extent, but the social measures to deal with it are the most advanced in Europe. There are no slums in Copenhagen. Old age has lost many of its terrors for the poor. Instead of the cold, forbidding walls of the workhouse, which is the lot of those in England who cannot support themselves on the old age pension, there is what is called the old people's village. It consists of hundreds of flats, where the old couples below a certain level of income can live free of charge.

In addition, there are recreation-rooms and concert-halls, a church and little gardens, each with its Wendy summer-house, where they can grow flowers and vegetables. There is no stigma about the institution. It is just a community of old people living out their days in peace and contentment.

Whitehall might well study, too, the way that Denmark treats sexual crime. The authorities do act up to the belief, held by most sensible men and women to-day, that assaults are far more a question for a doctor than a prison governor.

Sentences of detention are given more to effect a cure than to represent the vengeance of society. Their length is determined by the success of the treatment. Those for whom there is no hope are treated like criminal lunatics who remain at Broadmoor—as the terrible phrase goes, “during His Majesty’s pleasure.” But there is no atmosphere of the prison about their lives, except of course that they cannot escape.

The institution that I visited was like a well-run hospital. Some of the patients had rooms of their own, and there were opportunities for keeping canaries and making children’s toys and the like. In attendance was a staff of expert psychiatrists.

Yet the social services cannot be accused of encouraging sloth. The regulations governing the administration of unemployment benefit are severer than in England. The clause about “genuinely seeking work” is relentlessly applied. If it is thought that a man is not willing to work, he is sent to a place where there is no dole, and labour is obligatory.

The Danes are an extraordinarily happy people. I was there for the New Year celebrations, and I can testify that the idea of the “melancholy Dane” exists only in Shakespeare’s imagination. But, though there are no licensing restrictions, I saw no drunkenness—an interesting commentary on the argument that England, owing to her cold climate, cannot afford the free and easy methods of the Latin countries. The ordinary artisan can drink his beer with his family in surroundings far pleasanter even than in the marble halls of London’s popular cafés. Incidentally, he gets a free cabaret turn as well—to say nothing of the thrill of being served by a waitress in peasant costume, against a back-cloth of a scene depicting a mountain inn.

There is a brave though not particularly successful attempt to cultivate the arts. The Danes are not a bookish people. But there is an interesting attempt at a National Theatre which is subsidised by the State. I understand that it is proving a costly business. One of the privileges of a Danish member of Parliament is free admission to the stalls.

For the ambitious, no doubt Denmark has not a great deal to offer. There are "no glittering prizes," of the kind the late Lord Birkenhead admired, "for those with sharp swords." The Danes have no great "Imperial destiny" to pursue, "with head erect and bright eyes." But when one surveys the world to-day, and sees its Hitlers and its Mussolinis and its Stalins and all the other men who, in the pregnant phrase of Wells, "regard the lives of ordinary men as the raw material of their own careers," there seems more than ever to be said for little Denmark, whose favourite motto is : "If we don't get there to-day, we shall get there to-morrow."

Denmark is the paradise of the common man. It would be a bold man who would deny that, as such, she comes off best.

Co-operation in Denmark extends beyond marketing. There is much that is crude and vulgar in Copenhagen, but one gets the impression of a people, rooted in the old world, banding themselves to understand and welcome the new.

Again I ask myself the question, How long ? Down the windswept flats from Schleswig-Holstein—faintly as yet, it is true—the rumble and thunder of the new Pan-Germanism is heard. Brown shirts appear in the old German territories, and Denmark, that three years ago gave the only really practical demonstration in disarmament by disbanding half its army, begins to fit out its citizens with gas-masks.



## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE "HAMLET" TRAIL

WHEN I SAID that I was paying a visit to Denmark "to study bacon," one of my friends, more acquainted with first folios than pig quotas, thought that my purpose was to investigate the Baconian theory of Shakespeare.

It was not such a foolish supposition as I imagined, for Denmark presents some interesting speculations on Shakespeare. Every schoolboy knows *Hamlet*, but some of us have forgotten that the full title of the play is *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. But the Danes have not. They are very proud of their *Hamlet* relics.

There is the castle at Elsinore that was the *mise en scène* of the magnificent ghost scene in the first act. Though it actually is called Kronborg, it survives in all its turreted splendour, practically untouched, from the last decades of the sixteenth century, when it was built by Frederick II, and, under the name of Elsinore, immortalised by Shakespeare.

I was fortunate enough to visit it exactly at the appropriate moment—late on a Sunday afternoon, when the light was fading. The castle was actually closed to visitors, and we had to plead "English members of Parliament" to be admitted at all.

We thus had the ramparts to ourselves, and immediately there came that strange impression that we had seen it all before.

There were the bleak, forbidding walls of the castle ; the cold, grey expanse of water stretching out to a dark ridge that was all that could be seen of Sweden ; the platform of granite, and actually a soldier doing sentry duty. It was like the opening scene of a Tree production at His Majesty's come to life. Admittedly the ramparts were guarded by a row of obviously eighteenth-century guns, but, then,

Shakespeare was a playwright notoriously indifferent to little anachronisms of that kind.

What added to the eeriness of the scene was that below, on the shore, was one of the most frightening fog-horns I have ever heard. Two or three times a minute it would utter its terrible warning into the gathering darkness in notes that resembled the lowing of a herd of panic-stricken cows.

The last touch of Shakespearean realism was provided by the weather. It was bitterly cold. The wind swept along the ramparts and moaned and groaned round the castle walls. "The air bites shrewdly. It is very cold," remarked one of my companions. Not to be outdone, I replied: "It is a nipping and an eager air." It seemed the most natural conversation in the world, and had we been allowed to stay we should no doubt have persuaded ourselves that we actually saw the ghost as Bernardo described it: "In the same figure like the king that is dead."

But here the guide, as guides will, broke in on our séance with his patter about a personal visit of Shakespeare to the castle, and the performance of *Hamlet* in the banqueting-hall before the King and Queen of Denmark. It is a picturesque story, but I could only find the most insubstantial evidence for it. Christian IV and James I were great friends, and on several occasions paid visits to one another's dominions. It is recorded that on one of these visits James I was accompanied by a band of players. From this it is argued that Shakespeare quite likely accompanied them. But if he had done so it would almost certainly have been the Globe Theatre Company that made the tour, and there is no contemporary evidence that they ever left these shores to visit Denmark.

Even more improbable is the advertised site of Hamlet's grave. It is alleged that all it contains is a deceased cat, buried by some enterprising hotel keeper, with an eye to credulous tourists, some fifty years ago. Even the local inhabitants seem a little doubtful about its authenticity, for all that they have inscribed upon the stone slab is the bald statement that it was erected by the Elsinore Town Council

in 1926. There is, of course, no direct evidence that Hamlet ever existed at all. Shakespeare derives his story from the Danish sagas, which were first committed to paper by a Danish monk called Saxo about the twelfth century.

But direct invention or doubtful legend do not detract from the thrill of Elsinore to-day. Elsinore is a small ship-building town. Indeed, I actually saw a ship on the stocks under construction—a rare sight in these days of stranded tonnage. But it still contains a cobbled quay and an old-world harbour ; the Swedish ferry-boat cast its shadow over the table in the hotel where we lunched as it set out across the narrow sea. The place is still dominated by the majestic sixteenth-century castle on the shore.

If Shakespeare visited Elsinore to-day, even if it was for the first time, he would not find it very different from what he imagined it looked like more than three hundred years ago, or from what theatrical producers think that he imagined it looked like.

The only phenomenon that he would have difficulty in finding would be "a melancholy Dane." Even the shadow of the pig quota has not deprived them of their Nordic zest in life, judging by the manner in which I saw them honour a public holiday.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### THE GREAT WINSTON GAMBLE

**E**ARLY IN 1933 the attack on the India policy of the Government became more sustained and more menacing. Mr. Churchill believed that he could bring down the Government on it before this Parliament ends, unless it put the brake on its policy of sweeping grants of responsible Government to India.

Was Mr. Churchill mad ? That was the question his fellow countrymen who read the reports of his lonely onslaughts in the Indian debates on the apparently impregnable entrenchments of the National Government were asking at the beginning of this Parliament. Did he really think that he, almost single-handed, could reverse a policy approved by three Round Table Conferences and every responsible politician in two continents, and thus destroy a Government backed by the greatest majority ever recorded in history ? The charge at Balaclava seemed a sound tactical move compared with the forlorn hope that Mr. Churchill was leading.

So argued the stout party men in the Conservative Central Office and in the smoking-rooms of the House of Commons. And there was much to justify their contemptuous optimism. Mr. Churchill was at the head of a handful—or relatively a handful in numbers. There are some four hundred and seventy Conservative members of Parliament ; on two important discussions on the Indian policy he had only mustered forty-two against the Government. But, then, he was fighting at a tactical disadvantage. The Indian policy was still being shaped. It was possible, on every occasion that it was challenged, for Sir Samuel Hoare to contend that the main lines were still under discussion and that nothing was settled. Mr. Churchill was left beating the air. But in the spring of last year the White Paper was published. There

was the India policy in black and white. Admittedly it was to be presented to a Select Committee, who would subject it to the most searching dissection and would not shrink from imposing important amendments. But in that Committee the Government would have a majority, and, however plausibly the Secretary of State could appeal to the House to suspend judgment until a definite production of a Government of India Bill, it was clear that there could be no alteration in the framework of the policy—the grant of responsible Government at the centre. It was with that proposal that Mr. Churchill would not compromise, and very wisely he decided upon an arraignment of the whole policy embodied in the White Paper.

So the stage was set for a great Indian debate. For three days the White Paper was to be exposed to the criticism of what is the greatest, and indeed almost the only, debating society left in the world. Parliament was to return in all its might and majesty to its pre-war function as the “grand inquest of the nation.” We waited for the speech of Winston on India Home Rule as once they had waited for Joe Chamberlain after the Gladstone split on Ireland. Which day would he speak? How long would he speak for? Whom would he follow? All through the debate Mr. Churchill was bustling in and out, his cherubic face wreathed in smiles, taking every opportunity of hectoring the Treasury Bench, and upsetting young members with awkward interruptions. The red-haired Mr. Brendan Bracken occupied himself with the advance publicity, and he went about telling his friends that he had already heard parts of the speech and that it was going to be a thundering indictment of the Government. It was not surprising that the Under-Secretary for India, Mr. Butler, who preceded him on the afternoon of the third day of the debate, should refer to the time when “I have sat in the jungle of Central India watching a bait, in the form of a bullock or a calf tied to a tree, awaiting the arrival of the lord of the forest, and put there as a trap to entice him to his doom. On this occasion I have exactly the same feelings as those of the miserable animal whom I have so often looked

upon in that position, and I compare myself to that bait. I may compare my Right Hon. Friend the Member for Epping [Mr. Churchill] to the tiger."

When Mr. Churchill began, the simile seemed all too accurate. From his opening sentences it seemed as if he were going to deliver one of the greatest speeches of his life.

"We are approaching the end of the debate, but it is only the beginning of what may be one of the most serious controversies of British politics. It will be a painful controversy, because it must necessarily largely be conducted against friends, or former friends."

For the first time he appealed to the young members as such to come in with him.

"Let them beware in years that are to come, when another House of Commons will be here and perhaps other trains of thought will rule our minds, they do not find themselves by their own firesides when across the dark distances from India, to quote a celebrated phrase from John Morley, they hear '*The dull roar and scream of carnage and confusion.*'"

It was being superbly done. The House, packed to the galleries, was listening silent, fascinated by the greatest orator of our time. The front bench sat glum and uncomfortable.

Then came the Himalayan blunder. Mr. Churchill made a reference to the gerrymandering of the Civil Service in the interests of the home Government. "It is one of the greatest evils," he said, "of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms that throughout the Service the path of promotion has tended to be more easy for those who readily throw themselves into what are regarded as the irresistible moods of the British nation."

It was a grave charge. As always in the House of Commons, he was instantly challenged. From the dark recesses of the crowded Conservative benches there arose Sir John Wardlaw-Milne, chairman of the Conservative India

Committee, and as mild and courteous an Anglo-Indian as ever consumed tiffin : " Has the Right Hon. Gentleman any proof of that statement ? " he asked. The effect on Mr. Churchill was extraordinary. It was as if a great balloon had been punctured. He had made a sweeping generalisation, and it was clear that he had no facts upon which to substantiate it. He wavered, tried hard to go on with his speech, was headed back by insistent cries of " Answer ! Answer ! " and then blundered into the fatal description of his interrupter as " the Hon. Gentleman who is ready to act the bully." Loud and long was the laughter, for, if there is a bully in the House of Commons, it is Mr. Churchill.

I recorded the effect on the House in my diary the next day—March 30th, 1933 :

" For the moment the Winston bubble is pricked. Wardlaw-Milne's interruption really had a sensational effect. Winston had been at his theatrical best. . . . Then came the challenge, all the more deadly because it was so mild-mannered, the roar of applause that greeted it, the silence, and then the ridiculous answer. It was like the elephant complaining of the fly. The House dissolved into a contemptuous cascade of laughter, and from that moment Winston was done. The dramatic note went out of his voice ; electricity went out of the atmosphere. He floundered bravely on. But he had lost the House. Members began to chatter to one another, and then in twos and threes to drift out. What might have been the great speech of his life badly flopped. The rest of the debate he sat in his corner scowling, crumpled up by the magnitude of his failure. He will have to stage a big come-back to wipe out the memory of this catastrophe."

My diary ends there, but the *coup de grâce* was really given by Mr. Baldwin in the speech in which he wound up a memorable debate. It was a very astute performance. With extraordinary dexterity he demolished the most formidable Churchillian argument that the grant of responsible Government in India is a betrayal of Conservative principles. " My

right honourable friend," he said, "was brought up—as I was,—a Tory. For reasons that seemed good to him, he was not one of us during all the years that we were in the wilderness. During that time there was a great change in Tory thought. . . . When, in 1924, once more to our delectation Mr. Churchill was able to help us again after our great victory, there was a natural tendency on his part to revert to the Toryism in which he had been brought up. It is the Toryism of that time which is reflected to-day in his views on India, because those were the views of the Toryism of the times when he and I were young."

But, clever though it all was, Mr. Baldwin, too, made a false step. Alluding to the disastrous effects nationally and politically of Tory resistance to Home Rule and the trade unions, Mr. Baldwin said: "I am not going to be too late this time. . . . I am not going to adopt the policy of missing the bus every time." It was an argument neither sound nor elegantly phrased for granting responsible Government to three hundred and twenty millions of people, and it is one which the die-hards will not lightly let him forget.

I have described the Churchill fiasco at some length. It was perhaps the most dramatic event of this Parliament. In the fight against what is called "the surrender policy" it put Mr. Churchill temporarily out of action. But the fight went on with increased bitterness, and, indeed, increased success. When before Easter, on the motion to select a committee to enquire into the White Paper, the die-hard following rose to over eighty in the Division Lobby, the only difference was that, instead of leading them as before, Mr. Churchill directed them from the base.

Under his leadership there was launched an extremely clever tactical manoeuvre. It is still in progress now. Mr. Churchill knows that a frontal attack in the House of Commons with his existing troops is futile. He is attempting, therefore, a gigantic outflanking movement. He is taking the issue from the floor of the House of Commons to the committee-rooms of the Conservative Associations, and he is doing so with considerable success. Rank and file



Conservative supporters, unlike their nominal spokesmen in the House of Commons, can speak their minds, free from fear of any disciplinary action on the part of their Whips. In consequence, many of them have already weighed in on the side of Mr. Churchill.

One by one Conservative Associations are passing resolutions, not of support of their accredited leaders, but of encouragement to the guerilla chieftain. For the paradox of the situation is that, whatever Mr. Baldwin may say to the contrary, to the rank-and-file Conservatives in the country it is the rebel who is speaking the language of orthodoxy. It is Mr. Churchill, not Mr. Baldwin, who is the authentic voice of old-fashioned Toryism—love of the old order, hatred of radical change, belief that under Providence the British people have a mission to remain permanent masters of India. The campaign is very brilliantly managed. The Conservative working-men in the teeming Lancashire towns are joining hands with the country gentlemen, so cleverly have their fears been whipped up of further losses in the cotton trade by reason of self-government in India. It is the biggest revolt since that which beat and broke the apparently impregnable coalition of 1918.

The real fight for the moment is in the constituencies. Will Conservatism in the counties choose the Baldwin view or the Churchill view on India? It is still possible that Mr. Churchill may prevail. In that case the Conservative Party would be cut off from its base. It is the most brilliant turning movement that even Mr. Churchill, prince of political strategists, has ever attempted. Repulsed again and again, with heavy losses, before the entrenchments of a House of Commons majority, he has manœuvred himself into a position where he may leave the forts alone but still capture the city.

But it may be agreed that it is possible to capture even the capital of a country and lose the war. The army in the House of Commons will still be intact, and Mr. Baldwin is not the man to surrender at the first reverse, even though it be at the hands of a caucus meeting. What if Mr. Baldwin defies a

caucus verdict and decides to fight on? Mr. Churchill will still be left at the head of a die-hard rump and still be a long way from commanding a majority.

Mr. Churchill is fully alive to the dangers of a mere paper victory. I must apologise for using the military metaphor once again, but really it is impossible to discuss Mr. Churchill, whether in peace or war, except in the terms of the battlefield. War is the breath of his nostrils, and he brings to it all the lore of the military text-books. Every move in his political game is calculated as if it were on a large-scale map at general headquarters. Once he has captured the constituencies he will turn back to the House of Commons. He will not, with Rupert, pursue the flying wing that he has broken; rather, like Cromwell, will he turn and attempt to smash the enemy's centre from the rear. It will be a hazardous enterprise; but, then, all his life has been a hazardous enterprise.

As a schoolboy, asked what he intended to do with his life, he said, "Oh, I shall go into the Army and then have a shot at politics." He has been having shots at things ever since. He had fought in five wars before his contemporaries had finished lighting bonfires in college quads or making precocious speeches at the Union. Elected for Oldham, he gambled on a Liberal revival and was in high office in the next Liberal Government. Member of the first War Cabinet, and the man most responsible for the efficient organisation of the Fleet, he gambled on the Gallipoli campaign, lost, was driven out of office, and saw opprobrious epithets chalked up on his front door. After a discreet interval of retirement to the Western Front, he gambled on the return of Mr. Lloyd George to power, won, and became Minister of Munitions and then Secretary of State for War.

Then followed a series of gambles which daze me even to record. He gambled on an expedition to Russia in support of counter-revolution; he gambled on a policy of repression in Ireland, and, when that failed, on a policy of conciliation; defeated at Dundee, he gambled on the return of the Liberals in the General Election of 1923. That did not come off, and

after a brief interval when he appeared before the bewildered electors of Westminster as an Independent, in the General Election of 1924 he gambled on the return of the Conservatives. He has supported more contradictory policies than any man in public life (not excepting Mr. Lloyd George), and the most extraordinary thing about him is that at one time or another he has believed in each one of them. Now has come perhaps his best and certainly his greatest gamble, and probably his most sincere. He is to ride to power on the back of the Indian tiger.

He has on this occasion something on his side far more important than command over big battalions in the House of Commons Division Lobbies, and that is the march of events. Much has happened since he tried to wreck the Gandhi-Irwin conversations in Delhi by picturing Mr. Gandhi as "that seditious fakir striding half naked up the steps of the Viceroy's palace, there to parley and negotiate on equal terms with the representative of the King Emperor." There was a Radical Government in England then. It has not merely gone, but there is no great prospect of its return in the immediate future. There has been a swift and startling decay in the belief in democracy. The Indians themselves are beginning to doubt the value now that they are on the threshold of representative institutions. Congress is split from end to end. Gandhi, who with all his faults was the one binding force in the complexities of Indian political life, is in eclipse.

Two powerful potential allies are hesitating in their tents. In the debate before the summer recess last year, Mr. Lloyd George let fall some words about India which, though few, were significant. "I am not satisfied," he said in the House of Commons, "with the conference. I view them with considerable dubiety and do not believe that that is the best method of settling that question—but that is by the way." In February of 1934, Miss Lloyd George voted with the die-hards on the constitution of Ceylon. Even more formidable is the possibility of the emergence of Sir Austen Chamberlain. He alone of the

statesmen has made no public pronouncement throughout the Indian controversy. What is he thinking? It is of very considerable importance, for there is none in the House of Commons with a greater personal prestige. He alone in this Government could play the part of Bonar Law in 1922, for he alone of the great men not in the Cabinet is never accused, in any action he takes, of any mean or self-seeking motive.

Critics of the Government can put forward to the supporters of the White Paper this very difficult poser: Whom are you negotiating with in India? The parallel of the Irish treaty in 1921 is not a happy one. For when Michael Collins and Arthur Griffiths signed the treaty, the Government had pledged that they would stand by it and fight an election on it. What hope is there in India to-day of any party making either an honourable agreement of that kind or being able to keep it? The resolutions passed at the Liberal Congress at Madras recently are not encouraging. Here have the Liberal leaders been working side by side with the Joint Select Committee, and it was hoped that an agreement had been reached. Yet, the moment they return to India, "they walk out on it."

That, at any rate, will be the new Churchill attack, and, though there are answers to it, they are not so easy to make, as was the answer to their old criticisms on the actual framework of self-government.

Winston has still clearly a fighting chance. It would be a better one if he had a stronger position in the House of Commons. He has made his bid for the support of the young men, and so far he has curiously failed. But there is still time.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### RUSSIAN INTERLUDE

THE INTEREST of this Parliament is that, like a good cinema, there is a change of programme every week. We stagger from crisis to crisis. Long before we had finished talking about the Churchill flop the plight of the Russian prisoners was being forced upon our attention. For some days their position had been a subject for somewhat acrimonious question and answer. But the House was greatly startled to hear, on April 3rd, 1933, from the Prime Minister at question-time, that "A Bill will be presented to-morrow to take powers to deal with the importation of Russian goods into this country. It is proposed to pass the Bill through all its stages on Wednesday, with a view to its passage into law at the earliest possible moment."

It was clear that the situation was very serious, and the Opposition immediately demanded the publication, in the form of a White Paper, of all the correspondence and negotiations that had so far taken place. One of the remarkable features of this Parliament has been the way in which Mr. Lansbury, with none of the necessary training or aptitude, has yet acquired the technique of the Opposition leader. He pressed the Prime Minister quite in the classic manner of the leader of His Majesty's Opposition, and when his request was, after the usual diplomatic parryings, finally refused, he led his party in the grand manner in a prolonged obstruction of the Army and Air Force annual Bill. As a weapon of reprisal the Army annual Bill was first employed, I believe, by the young Conservatives after the disaster of 1905. It was in 1906, as a retaliation for the insolence and intolerance of the Liberals in their hour of triumph, that they fought the Army annual Bill—the passage of which, in normal times, takes less than an hour—from 1.30 a.m. (the sitting having begun as usual at 2.45 p.m. on the previous day) until 6 p.m. in the evening.

I had only heard a few sentences from Mr. Morgan Jones, who led off for the Labour Party, to appreciate how endless were the opportunities created by the Act for raising irrelevant details in the guise of questions of grave political principle. He was at pains to discover from the Government what was the precise meaning of an item in the schedule labelled "Stable Room." "What on earth does a member of the Air Force want with stable room? . . . You cannot stable an aeroplane, and certainly not in a stable as contemplated here. If it could be put in a stable, the size necessary to house it would cost more than 2s. 3d. a day." He switched off to the subject of billeting, but was told by the Chairman of Committee that it came under another section of the Billeting Act and could not be raised under that clause. Whereupon he very slowly read the whole clause, a process which wasted two or three minutes. Headed off this, he was back again at the housing of horses. What about provender? "There was a vital point: Was it to be Empire corn or foreign corn? May I ask whether that point was raised at Ottawa or not? It was a matter of first-class importance to the State. . . ." So it went on, hour after hour.

There is a natural tendency to scoff at these frivolities, and for electors to throw up hands of horror at this apparent wastage of parliamentary time. But one of the major justifications of parliamentary government is that the minority parties should be able to bring influence on the party in power. When all other methods fail, the Opposition have no other course but to do their utmost to upset the Government time-table until their demands are granted. If they are reasonable, the Government, whatever its majority, will give way. It did so on this occasion. The request for a White Paper to be published before the Russian debate was eventually granted. The Opposition had more than justified itself.

The debate, when it came, found the House in as ugly a temper as it perhaps has been since the war. Passions ran high, and they were expressed in fierce outbursts of cheering, jingo interruptions, and angry intolerance of Sir Stafford

Cripps, who led the Opposition. It was all a grim warning of how easily men, ordinarily level-headed and pacific, can be worked up almost into a war fever by a tale of injustice and wrong. It was unfortunate on this occasion that the case for the Government should have been in the hands of Sir John Simon and Mr. Walter Runciman.

As the surviving Liberal Ministers in the National Government surrounded by cohorts of Conservatives they have felt themselves at a disadvantage. Inevitably they have tended to play up to Conservative sentiment instead of making an attempt to damp it down. Sir John Simon's indictment of the methods on which the Soviet Government had proceeded would have been far more deadly if he had maintained his lawyer's air of cold analysis. But there crept into it the rhodomontade of the Old Bailey advocate. I remember his quotation from a telegram from our Ambassador in Moscow, on the appearance of the prisoners after their cross-examination, ending with the words, "They were all obviously terrified of speaking." Sir John's voice sunk to a whisper as he repeated the words, "Englishmen terrified of speaking." There was a crescendo of cheering. The Conservative Press discovered the next day "another Sir John Simon, not the cold lawyer, but the man of deep feeling." For myself I prefer the old Sir John Simon. It is far more sincere.

It was the same with Mr. Walter Runciman. In his Independent Liberal days, efficiency was his middle name. He spoke like the chairman of directors of a gilt-edged company. On this occasion he became not merely jingo but jocose. He was answering the argument that, instead of prohibiting Russian goods to be imported into this country, we ought to have threatened to withdraw our Ambassador. "But would the withdrawal of Sir Esmond Ovey," he mocked, "have brought the Russian Government to their knees? Such a withdrawal would not have touched them on a sensitive spot. If you ask me whether this touches them upon a sensitive spot, I say that it does; and, what is more, it is the only spot that we can reach." There was the kind of

laughter that, in any almost exclusively male company, greet oblique references to backsides.

I had never realised more poignantly the fundamental difference that there is in outlook and mentality between the average Conservative and the average Liberal. The followers of Sir Herbert Samuel had come prepared to give all their support to the Government in the measures they proposed. However much they might question their wisdom, it was felt that, in a question like this, the decision in such an emergency must be left to the Executive. But Simon's heroics and Runciman's levity damped our ardour, and when Mr. Runciman, in winding up the debate in a packed and noisy House, refused to make any answer to Sir Herbert Samuel's request for an assurance that the prohibition of imports was directed solely to the release of the prisoners, and not as a permanent item of our trade policy, our reluctance to support the Government hardened into a refusal. I will leave my diary to tell the story.

"*April 6th.*—Heard Runciman wind up the debate from the Gallery, the floor being too crowded to get a seat. The atmosphere was quite horrible—practically no attempt to bring a judicial mind to the grave situation. Sudden gusts of purely jingo enthusiasm. Moral indignation, no doubt, at the way the prisoners have been treated, but a good deal of pent-up spite against a form of Government that the Tories not merely detest but fear. Difficult to prevent political prejudice on the other side from making one forget prisoners awaiting trial. To see Runciman, soaked from his cradle in the Liberal outlook, appealing to the worst Nationalist passions. No assurance that the embargo is only for the immediate purpose of release of prisoners. Samuel was on his feet the moment R. sat down, asking again for an answer to his question. This refused with a sneer, that comes particularly ill from Runciman, that Free Trade principles were not at stake in this issue. I came down from the Gallery, and found pandemonium on the Liberal benches. We had been openly flouted. A decision had to be made while the division was actually going on as to what we should do. Overwhelming



feeling was that we could not vote under such circumstances, and we sat, surrounded with Tories, bubbling over with rage and indignation.

"Half an hour afterwards I was still almost incoherent at the thought that these unfortunate prisoners were being used as a Tory dodge to scrap the Trade Agreement with Russia, and, as I could not sleep, I rang up Hugh Molson, and went across to his flat to talk it over with him. It is all so silly, because the slightest gesture of friendliness would have brought the Liberals in, and, incidentally, strengthened immensely our protest in Russian eyes.

"*April 8th.*—Runciman climbed down. Intervening in the debate early yesterday afternoon, he said: 'I say at once that, so far as I am concerned, the prime consideration with me is the life and liberty of these men. I will at once, therefore, give an undertaking on behalf of the Government that we shall not use these powers for any other purpose.'

"In the name of common sense, why did he not give these assurances the night before? The explanation is that he is himself for making the prohibition permanent. For two days he had argued in the Cabinet on those lines. Once again the die-hard point of view had the support of the Liberal element in this Cabinet. It was Hailsham *v.* Baldwin in the Cabinet, and the Liberal Runciman was on the side of Hailsham. It all shows that the climb down was as complete as any there could be.

"It is extraordinary how Liberal after Liberal who goes Right tends to go to the extreme Right, like Winston. The change of atmosphere helps. These full-throated Tory cheers go to the head, and sweep away all judgment. It is understandable. Runciman and Simon have been for fifteen years fighting a battle for a Liberal revival—all honour to them—against terrible odds, derided and spat upon. Now they find themselves hailed by their old enemies as the saviours of society. It must be difficult not to strike the appropriate attitudes."

It was some days before the bitterness aroused in this debate died down. I did not help the situation by a most

foolish interruption. At a late stage of the debate that afternoon, I detected Sir John Simon reading a newspaper on the Treasury Bench. It was the *Daily Worker*, and, as he was consulting the Attorney-General, who was sitting next to him, it was clear they were debating the advisability of a prosecution against the editor for an article that had created some attention at the time. I remembered the indignation with which Sir John had spoken of the State prosecution in Russia, and I could not help thinking—though I have since been assured by lawyers that it was not a fair parallel—that something of the same kind was being discussed now: the interference of the Executive with the Judicature. The conversation ended, but Sir John Simon went on reading the paper. I could stand it no longer; I jumped to my feet. "On a point of order, Captain Bourne,<sup>1</sup> is it in order for a Right Hon. Gentleman to read a great national newspaper on the Treasury Bench?" The Deputy-Chairman had to uphold the rule, and Sir John Simon withdrew, in order, as he acidly remarked, to comply with the views of the Hon. Gentleman.

The moment I sat down I was aghast at my own impertinence, and as we went through the Lobby I sought out Sir John and offered him my apologies, which, the soul of courtesy that he is, he handsomely accepted. But this small incident shows how high tempers ran at the time. Indeed the whole debate indicated that there may well come a time when, in spite of the truce of 1931, on some great dividing question Liberals and Conservatives will fall upon one another again with as great a ferocity as they did in pre-war days. Though they can unite on specific issues, temperamentally they are still poles apart.

The Russian reel ran out, and there was another swift change of scene. Before the Easter adjournment came, Russia had been crowded off the stage by the news from Germany. It was like the war all over again. The news of atrocities began to trickle through the Nazi curtain of the censorship. Then came the refugees, and the stories of

<sup>1</sup> The Deputy Chairman of Committees.

barbarities, in a flood. It was Sir Austen Chamberlain who first brought the situation, in all its alarming significance, before the House of Commons. Speaking to an almost empty House on the morning of the Easter adjournment, he suddenly broke into a denunciation of the new Germany :

“ What is this new spirit of German Nationalism ? The worst of the old Prussian Imperialism with an added savagery, a racial pride, an exclusiveness which cannot allow to any fellow subject not ‘ of pure Nordic birth ’ equality of rights and citizenship within the nation to which he belongs.

“ . . . Europe is menaced and Germany is afflicted by this narrow, exclusive, aggressive spirit by which it is a crime to be in favour of peace and a crime to be a Jew.”

Sentence after sentence of this indictment—cold, calculated, restrained, they fell on the House of Commons like the hammer-strokes of one of the great war speeches of Mr. Asquith.

I know that I resolved, there and then, to seize the first opportunity of visiting the new Germany and finding out what it might portend.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### I MEET DR. BRUENING

SO, TAKING ADVANTAGE of the Whitsun recess, I set off with Frank Milton as a companion, to explore for myself Nazi Germany. We took precautions for our personal safety that now seem fantastic. I remember sitting up in my bunk during the night crossing, systematically destroying all incriminating documents. Addresses in Germany that had been given me I solemnly put down in code in my pocket-book. We had been told that from the moment we crossed over the German frontier to the moment we crossed back we should be watched, and, in consequence, when the train finally reached the German frontier we began to behave in the most suspicious manner, sinking our voices when a ticket-collector passed and ceasing to talk altogether when another passenger entered the carriage. Arrived in Berlin, we were afraid to ask the way to our hotel for fear of being betrayed by our English accents. In fact, we justified an arrest from the start as being men with obviously something to conceal.

For all that, the stories about the changed Berlin were not exaggerated. It was less than nine months since I had last visited it, but it was like seeing a town in war-time that one had previously only known in peace. Unter den Linden was like Piccadilly in 1914—all the glamour of recruiting with none of the disillusionment. Nazis were everywhere. At first they seemed all alike, in their khaki shorts and ties and their brassards decorated with the swastika. But there were infinite gradations of them. Some had no tabs on their shirts and were just for anybody to order about ; others wore black breeches and had mysterious numbers on their collars, indicating the Storm Troop to which they belonged ; and when I penetrated to the office of one of the Nazi chiefs I found him guarded by young men clothed completely

in black, who were obviously very important indeed. But, whatever their rank, there was about them an engaging air of importance. They whirled about in motor-lorries; they marched with extraordinary zest in columns of five; they shouted "*Heil, Hitler!*" at one another from morning till midnight. Whatever there might be of evil in the Nazi movement, it did appeal to that ingrained desire in German youth to wear a smart uniform and to obey and be obeyed. Berlin was playing soldiers, and was enjoying it immensely.

There was an atmosphere, too—so reminiscent of war-time—of everybody waiting for something to happen. Ropes were permanently stretched across the pavement to keep back the crowds watching the Ministers going to and fro from the Chancellor's House to the Wilhelmstrasse. The day after we arrived was the anniversary of Jutland, called by the Germans Skagerrak, and, in accordance with custom, President Hindenburg's house was guarded that week by sailors instead of a detachment of the Reichswehr. In other years it had attracted only casual notice. But every day when the guard was changed on this occasion the Wilhelmstrasse had to be closed to traffic altogether, so dense were the cheering crowds which had turned out to watch the ceremony.

The patriotic fervour far exceeded anything in England in August days of 1914. When I arrived, the flag emblazoned with a swastika appeared in the most unlikely places—flying from public-houses, embroidered on neck-ties, fastened round chocolates, fluttering from the handle-bars of bicycles and even from railway signal-boxes. Kitchener in 1914 and Mr. Lloyd George in 1918 were obscure figures compared to the blaze of hero-worship in which Herr Hitler moves. His unimpressive features stared down at one at every turn. He had been photographed from every conceivable attitude: in uniform, reviewing his troops; in morning coat at the grave of Frederick the Great; in full tide of oratory on the platform, and immersed in papers at his desk. He could be worn as a button or a brooch, engraved on a ring or stamped on a cigarette-case, or used

to adorn anything from a petrol-lighter to a birthday-card.

It was a startling change. Nine months ago all interest was centred in pictures of Hindenburg and the Royal Family and the glittering pre-war pageant of Empire. Now the Hohenzollerns had disappeared entirely from the picture-shops, and Hindenburg survived, if at all, in an obscure window as a picturesque appendage to the Chancellor.

But all this bustle and braggadocio was only one side of Berlin. There were quarters of Berlin which were as empty and quiet as the main streets were tumultuous and exuberant. The Kurfürstendamm, once as gaily illuminated as Broadway, was as dark and silent as if the city were under siege. Most of the cafés were shut altogether, and those that presumably bought immunity by displaying the Nazi flag were so deserted that they looked as if they would prefer to have been put out of their misery. Certainly there was much in the old Berlin night-life that was particularly unsavoury, and Hitler is to be congratulated on suppressing it. But in shutting down the evil he has shut down the good as well. Nowhere in Europe, for instance, was the theatre more vigorous and original than in Berlin. Now there were scarcely half a dozen theatres open, and their fare was unrelieved trash.

Then there were the Berliners who were not in uniform. We were not in Berlin more than a few minutes before we understood what a living nightmare their existence has become. Their letters are opened ; their telephone is tapped ; meetings have to be arranged at strange houses and in distant suburbs. Friends who had been kind to me in Berlin the year before I now dare not ring up. I did not know what view the police might take of them, and I was warned that even a letter from an English M.P., known to be out of sympathy with the Nazi régime, might be a source of embarrassment to them.

We had the most extraordinary meeting with Dr. Bruening. I had been given an introduction to him, and I sent it, in the ordinary way, through the post. Two days later

I was told that a lady wished to see me in the hall of my hotel. She would not give any name. I went down, and found Dr. Bruening's secretary. She had come, like Nicodemus, by night. Dr. Bruening would be very glad to see us. But we must be very careful. A few weeks ago he had had to change his place of lodging five times in one week. She did not know whether the police knew where he was living now. At any rate, it was better to be on the safe side. If we came by taxi we must dismiss the taxi a few streets away.

It was a sad meeting with the great ex-Chancellor in exile in his own country. There was no trace of bitterness in his talk ; just rather a wry humour behind his gleaming spectacles. I asked him how well Hitler and Hindenburg got on together. " Oh, well, the President never keeps a Chancellor long, you know "—no doubt an oblique reference to his own dismissal by Hindenburg exactly a year ago that day.

His estimate of the situation in the light of after-events was extraordinary shrewd. He touched on the position of the Nationalists in the Cabinet. I recalled that it had been said in England that, holding eight out of twelve Cabinet posts, they would be able to control the situation ; that Hitler would be in the position of Ramsay MacDonald in the National Government. " Oh, no," he said, " that is not the position at all. The Nationalists are doomed. Hugenberg will go first." He did, three weeks later, and before the summer was out the Nationalist Party had gone too. " Hitler has come to stay," he answered in reply to another question. There was no alternative Government. In addition to the Reichswehr and the police, the Government had over a million auxiliary troops in the shape of Nazis. It was no use making speeches. They would be instantly suppressed. The only hope was the use of quiet influence upon the Government.

Bruening had been with Hitler that morning. He had been trying to persuade him to allow men who were confined in a concentration camp to have legal assistance. " But I can only appeal," he added, " I have no power." There

was something infinitely pathetic in this charming, upright man reduced to begging favours in the Chancellery where so recently he had commanded.

But I could see why Bruening had fallen. A new world had arisen in Germany of which he had no understanding and to which he made no appeal. Men wanted colour and excitement, uniforms and sabre-rattling speeches, and he could only give them sober common sense. Times had changed, and he could not change with them. I could see something in the taunt a Nazi leader made to me that "Bruening ought to have been a monk." He was too kindly, too restrained, for a noisy, resurgent Germany. They wanted magnetic leadership, and he could only give them stilted *communiqués* to the Press about the necessity of balancing the Budget.

So he had been swept aside by the tide of events. It was rather like Mr. Asquith in the war, who refused, as he once put it, "to mistake bustle for business and vehemence for strength." But there is a time when the popular will demands bustle and vehemence, and will accord their support to any magnetic leader who can provide them. Such a moment had come in Germany, and with it a wave of ruthless intolerance.

But Bruening's fate was only that of scores of lesser men. It was not merely Bruening, but freedom, that had gone into hiding. Milton and I found it so horribly oppressive that, when the week-end came, we felt that we must get a respite from it all. Where could we go? We remembered the Danzig elections taking place that Sunday, and decided to set off there by aeroplane the next morning.



## CHAPTER XXXIX

### DANZIG—A DYING CITY

IT MAY SEEM strange that we chose to travel three hundred miles to what was after all on the surface only a municipal election.

Apart from anything else, elections have a fascinating lure for me. Election figures are my hobby. Other men collect stamps or know their Bradshaw. I know what the Labour vote was in the Westbury by-election of 1927, or how many votes an Independent Liberal candidate polled against Mr. Churchill in the Abbey Division of Westminster in 1924. Perhaps it is an inheritance from my private-school days, when I knew the initials of every first-class cricketer and his correct batting average. The art of amassing useless information learnt young dies hard. Milton is a greater fiend than I am at election figures. I once lost a shilling to him because, in the course of a bathe at Harlech, I denied that an Independent Labour candidate had stood against Mr. Baldwin at Bewdley, and lost my bet. So the thought of an election, with lots of parties and proportional representation into the bargain, opened out a glorious vista of song and dance for us.

But the election at Danzig last June was concerned with far more than municipal issues. Danzig, before the war a German port, had been declared, at Versailles, a free city. It meant in actual fact the suzerainty of the Poles. They controlled its foreign relations, they managed its railway system, and there was guaranteed to them the free use of the docks and waterways. In a town that was ninety-six per cent German in population it was obviously a difficult position. With the rise of a militant Nazi Party the difficulties developed into dangers. So far the Nazis had been in a minority. At this election they were making a bid for power. What would happen if they achieved it? The success of the

Danzig Nazis might tempt their comrades across the border to walk in and re-annex the town to the Reich. What would the Poles do then? Alternatively, if elected, the Nazis might launch a war against the minorities of the same ruthless character as was being conducted in Germany. That would raise a highly ticklish situation. For there was a resident Commissioner, appointed by the League of Nations, to watch over the interests of the minorities. What was he to do if their rights were wantonly violated? There were only two courses before him. He could appeal to the League, or the Polish Army would be called in. Clearly, for the moment, then, Danzig was the powder magazine of Europe.

We found when we arrived, the town in a state of extreme tension. There had been a serious clash between the Nazis and the Poles the night before, in which seventy people had been injured. The situation had not been helped by the production of a news film, in which the Nazi boys were depicted lacerating the backs of Danzig Jews. It had been discovered that it was all an election fake. It had been carefully staged. The "Nazis" were Poles dressed up in brown shirts for the occasion.

We set off on a tour to see the sights and study the election appeals, and, incidentally, to find out if there was any party to which we could devote a vicarious political enthusiasm. The latter task was extremely difficult. There did not seem any party which made strong appeal to a couple of English Liberals. There were the Nazis, the Social Democrats, the Catholic Centre Party, the Communists, and the Poles. In the end we chose the Poles. There were only thirty thousand of them in the whole of Danzig, so that they had no prospect of power. That in itself made an appeal to us. When we subsequently learnt that they were also split into two sections, we felt quite at home in the Polish Party. At the same time we found it difficult to become very enthusiastic about the Polish record in Danzig. The Polish Army is the shadow over the city. Danzig is encircled with steel.

Its prosperity has been throttled. Its port is entirely

dependent on the goodwill of Poland. All the hinterland is Polish, so that the Poles can manipulate the customs at will. It was once the great port for grain and timber. But here is Danzig's tragedy : the constant strikes and inevitable bitterness among the nationalist-minded dockers after the war led the Poles to look elsewhere for their goods to be handled. The climax was reached in 1920, when, in the war in which Poland was engaged, the German dockers refused to handle the munitions. Poland decided to build a port in its territory, and the results is that out of a fishing-village grew the wharves and warehouses of the great port of Gdynia, seven miles away in the Polish Corridor.

It was a bitter revenge. Danzig, so far as its trade is concerned is a dying city. It is like the port of London, which has never really recovered from the great dock strike of 1889, when the shipping was diverted to Southampton, and never subsequently returned. Danzig's plight, of course, is infinitely worse. We made a tour of the docks that afternoon. Grass was growing on the wharves ; not a ship was being built. " Make Danzig German Again," shrieked the Nazi posters, from the hoardings. Our Polish guide was contemptuous. " They are just beating the air. The more they clamour for a German Danzig, the greater will be the decline of the Danzig trade."

How imbecile it all is. Here is this lovely city, with its cobble-stones and shaded streets and superb carving, even in the restaurants, an almost perfect replica of the mediæval city, a helpless victim of jealousies, and passive and naked national spite. The Polish propagandist can claim that history is on his side. We were proudly shown, by a young Pole, in the beautiful thirteenth-century town hall, the emblem of the Polish eagle, engraved in stone. It does not excuse Poland's present attitude. She clamoured for a port, and, now she has been given one, she has killed it. She does not want it herself, and yet she will not relinquish it to Germany.

Danzig was once a free city. She is no longer free, and,

if the present tendency is allowed to continue, she will not survive as a city.

Hitler made a broadcast speech that night, but there was, significantly, no specific reference to Danzig. It was clear that, for the time being, he was not prepared to kick against the pricks.

The position of Danzig has in fact actually improved a little as the result of the Nazi regime. There has been the Gdynia-Danzig agreement, by which 48 per cent of the trade is to go to Danzig and 52 per cent to Gdynia. It does however little more than stabilise Danzig's plight. Half its trade has gone for ever.

## CHAPTER XL

### A SUNDAY IN THE CORRIDOR

SUNDAY was election day, and there was nothing likely to happen until the evening, so we accepted an invitation from hospitable Poles to explore the Polish Corridor. We learnt at the outset that the phrase "Polish Corridor" is very unpopular. I can well understand it. The name is itself valuable German propaganda. We were embarrassed as to how to refer to it until Milton coined the appellation "*Poland redenta*," and all was well.

Our first port of call was Gdynia. It is like a vast middle-west city in process of construction. In 1922 it was a collection of fishermen's huts. Now it is a town of forty thousand inhabitants. A few whitewashed cottages stand derisive survivals amid vast buildings of sky-scraper height. Ten years ago there was no railway; now there are acres of railway tracks. There are no fewer than five separate harbours. Warehouses run the whole length. There is a naval dockyard and gigantic machinery for loading coal. With the blue sea dancing in the sunlight in front of the latest twentieth-century appliances, Gdynia seemed a refreshing indication that there was still need even in stricken post-war Europe, for a new outlet for trade and enterprise. Then we remembered Danzig harbour less than half an hour away by car, silent and empty. That was the price that had been paid for all this hum and throb of new activity. The Poles, excellent propagandists that they are, had an answer for all this. Poland, they argued, had need of more than one port. Did not England have three hundred?

We motored on into "*Poland redenta*," to discover that Polish nationalism is intense. On all sides memorials were springing up. Instinctively we thought that they were being somewhat belatedly erected in memory of the last war,

only to discover that they were commemorating one or other of the long-forgotten battles before the Partition. We stopped at a road-house for lunch, to find ourselves involved in some kind of Nationalist celebration. Here was a general in full-dress uniform like a character in a Shaw play, and a great many speeches and patriotic songs between each course. It was all in Polish, but it was impossible not to catch the infection of it all, and we roared the choruses with the loudest of them.

The Poles are the gayest people in the world. Unlike most oppressed peoples released from bondage, they really do exult in their new-won liberty. They know all the arguments for it, and they are ready to fight to the last. It was clear, from our talks with some of these young men at the lunch, that conscription was not unpopular, even though it involved a discipline as harsh as in the pre-war German days. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the case, Poland means to hold on to what she has got. I am not surprised that Hitler has since made a ten years' pact with Poland. Of all his neighbours she is the most formidable, for, when she says that in such and such event the army will march into Germany, she means it.

So far as the Polish Corridor is concerned, both history and statistics are on the side of Poland. Never before 1772 was it an integral part of Germany. Indeed there is substance in the Polish objection to it being called a "corridor." The Poles insist that it is just Polish territory reclaimed after one hundred and fifty years. Certainly during that time it never lost its Polish character. Our friends told us, as we drove through it, that, in spite of compulsory German in the schools and compulsory military service, the Polish sympathies in all that long servitude never wavered. We could see that in the Polish signs outside the village shops, and the Polish words that floated up to us from the groups of villagers that we passed. It was borne out in the maps and statistics of the Prussian Government, issued in 1910. They prove beyond dispute that the majority was Polish, that the language was Polish, and that their political sympathies

—judged by the number of Poles that this corner of the old Germany sent to the Prussian Diet—were Polish too. But, in spite of the overwhelming majority of Poles, the Corridor is very difficult to justify. It is as if Britain round Hadrian's Wall were in the occupation of foreigners, and that in order to get to Edinburgh a Londoner had to cross through foreign territory. There is no possible way, for instance, for President Hindenburg to go by land to his Neudeck estates except through Polish territory. There are exasperating customs and passport restrictions. The trains from Germany to East Prussia, when they pass through the Corridor, have to be sealed up. Not long ago one of these trains had a breakdown, and for five hours one blazing summer afternoon the passengers had to sit sweltering, with the windows shut. At one place along the frontier, it is necessary, in order to avoid frontier delays, to make a detour of three hours when the journey would ordinarily take thirty minutes. The frontier has been arranged as if to create the maximum of inconvenience. At Marienburg there is one winding street which necessitates crossing and re-crossing the frontier eight times. In another place the frontier has been drawn across gardens facing the river, so that young Germans are doomed, day after day, to see the tempting water in front of them and a line of barbed wire preventing them from going down to bathe.

Obviously the arrangements of frontiers in their present form cannot survive the passage of the years. But for the moment there is no sign of accommodation among the Poles. With their army and air force, they are on top, and they mean to remain so. We saw, in the Corridor, new roads, new railways, even the beginning of a Polish Riviera on the Baltic—all indicative of the belief in the permanency of the present situation.

On our return, the results of the election were just coming out. By midnight the position was clear. The Nazis had thirty-eight seats; the Social Democrats thirteen; the Catholic Centre ten; the Communists five; and our Polish friends two—one each for the rival organisations.

It was surprising that the Nazis had not done better. But Danzig would clearly be a Nazi-controlled city, and the difficulties of the Commissioner would be enormously increased. He had, now, important responsibilities in a city whose officials would in reality be taking their orders from Berlin. For the moment the command from Berlin was "soft pedal down," but I felt that it might not be always so. The customs, for instance, present endless opportunities for friction. Danzig is in a customs union with Poland, which at that time was itself engaged in a Tariff war with Germany. Henceforward it was clear that the independence of Danzig, so far as its ordinary administration was concerned, existed only in name. Herr Rauschning, the new chief Minister in Danzig, left the next night to consult Hitler in Berlin. He is now as much a Statthalter of the Reich as the nominal Governor of Bavaria.

In spite of the German-Polish Pact I believe that Danzig is the most impermanent of all the settlements at Versailles. It has no roots either in logic, or in justice, or in political realities.



## CHAPTER XLI

### WHY I DID NOT SEE HITLER

WE RETURNED to Berlin the same night to begin seriously our investigation into the Jewish problem, which was the real object of my visit. I had promised Major Nathan, the Liberal M.P. for North-East Bethnal Green, who had thrown himself with characteristic energy into the German-Jewish problem, to write a memorandum, which I would read, on my return, to the Central Jewish Consultation Committee of which he was Chairman.

My first task was to try and get an interview with Hitler. I had been careful to take no part in anti-Nazi demonstrations before I left England, so that as far as I knew I was not on any black list. My efforts were a dismal failure, as the following letter, which I wrote to Tom Clarke, then the editor of the *News Chronicle*, shows :

“MY DEAR T. C.,—

I have been trying to get a line on Hitler. I thought I had done it. The interview was practically arranged. Then questions were raised about my name. Was it not Jewish?

“As a matter of fact, my great-grandfather was a German Jew—but, as he fought at the battle of Leipsig, I might have got off on ex-service grounds! I have generations of parsons on both sides of my family.

“Then who was my leader in the House of Commons? Sir Herbert Samuel. That finished it. The fiat has gone out that. Bernays is not of *rein arischer Abstammung*—of real Aryan descent—and the Reich Chancellor’s door is shut against me.

“It is a very disturbing country. I do not agree with all this stuff which is being pumped out that Germany is looking inwards. She is for the moment, but I fear that Hitler’s famous speech is more recovery of breath than sincere pacifism.

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"The only hope of influencing the German Government in the right direction is a continuous douche of cold, detailed, unhysterical criticism. But it must come from non-Jewish sources. The value of one speech from Austen Chamberlain is worth ten Albert Hall demonstrations organised by the Jews.

"The Jewish complex is incredible. The Nazis think that, in England, Press, Parliament, the B.B.C., the publishers' offices, the Bar, the City, are just so many extensions of the ghetto. It is almost impossible to get the Nazis to understand that the nation dislikes the German method of government and not just the persecution of the Jews."

An amusing story lies behind my failure. I had succeeded in getting an interview with Herr Hammstaengl, the chief Nazi press agent, a charming and ebullient young man in the middle thirties. He is Hitler's great personal friend, one of the few that he possesses. He is an expert pianist, and plays Hitler to sleep.

It is a kind of Saul and David friendship. Hitler is a fascinating psychological study. Within the framework of his mission he has no ideas of his own, economic or constitutional. His opinion, when he is normal, tends to be that of the last man who has visited him.

But the danger is that he is not always normal. There are moments, if he is crossed in some way, when the eyes become staring and glazed and the mouth twitches. Some remark about the Jews will send him into a paroxysm of anger. The veins will stand out on his face and for some minutes he will be incoherent. Then the storm passes away and he returns to ordinary conversational tones. From this it is argued that he is an epileptic. The Greeks call epilepsy "the disease of the Gods." Hitler does appear from time to time as if he was under some kind of trance. He may not be an epileptic, but he is certainly what psychologists would call to-day "a pathological case."

There are the obvious whispers that Hitler is a sexual

pervert. I am convinced that they are a slander. Hitler is an ascetic ; he does not drink and he does not smoke. In private life he is a shy man. He abominates the social intercourse expected of a man in his position. When he lunched this February at the British Embassy to meet Anthony Eden, it was the first time that he had ever visited it. But he does suffer from what can only be described as mild seizures. It is in these that Herr Hammstaengl comes and soothes the savage breast. He is " the cunning player on the harp " that Saul's servants suggested should be sent for in a similar situation—" And it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his harp, and thou shalt be well." So it is with Chancellor Hitler.

There is, indeed, something strange about most of the Nazi leaders. Captain Goering, the Air Minister, has suffered indignities that have pierced his soul. During the war he was a flying ace ; he brought down more than forty aeroplanes. He was very badly wounded. He took to drugs. But he is cured now. The suggestion that he is a morphia-fiend, and that he takes " snow " in the middle of important conversations, is rubbish. The explanation for his zest for persecution is psychological.

When he came back from the front after the armistice, his epaulettes were torn off his officer's uniform. It was excusable. The mob were maddened by hunger and disappointment. But Captain Goering never forgot and never forgave. His hatred for the authors of the Republic thereafter was relentless in its ferocity.

Then there is Dr. Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda and the most astute of them all. His trouble is not merely that he has Jewish blood, but that he shows it. In his photographs it is unmistakable. His fury against the Jews is intensified by his anxiety to prove beyond question that he is not one of them. It is an odd gallery of Freudian portraits that the new Germany has thrown up ; but, then, that is the stuff of which revolutions are made.

Hammstaengl was suspicious about me at the start. He rang up the Embassy. " Who is this Mr. Bernays ? " he

asked. "It is a Jewish name. We call it Bernice here." A secretary who knew me personally replied, "I don't know what you call it in Germany, but in England it is pronounced like it is spelt—Bernays." So he saw me.

I was ushered by two dark-uniformed Nazis into a small room with a deal table, with Hammstaengl on one side and a girl secretary on the other. Any minor secretary in the Unionist offices in Palace Chambers lives in greater splendour.

A few minutes' sparring and we were on the Jews. As well argue with a convert about Catholicism as with an anti-Semite. He would not concede that there was any case on the other side. Jews were fundamentally anti-national. They were guests in the country, and they had abused their position and they must go. I asked him whether he was surprised at the indignation in England. He regarded it as purely the work of the Jews in England. "Your Press, your law, your finance, your politics, are all controlled by the Jews." He launched into a scorching indictment of their attitude, their sensuality, their shoddiness. He contrasted Lytton Strachey with Dickens. "What a mean and dirty attack that was on Queen Victoria. Now, Dickens really expresses the soul of England." I tried to point out that, even if what he said was true, Lytton Strachey, so far as I was aware, was not a Jew.

It was useless. He swept on to a crescendo of abuse against the Jews, ending with a last thrust: "Go and tell your Jewish friends that." I begged him to realise that it was not only my Jewish friends, but the British nation, that was horror-stricken by what had happened. I instanced the debate in the House of Commons to which I had listened a few days before, and he subsequently admitted that the ferocity of the persecution was a mistake. "There ought to have been more discrimination, but you must realise that it was a revolution last March, not a change of Government."

Hitler was not a man of war. "Let the French march to Berlin if they like. We have no power to prevent them. The enemy is an internal enemy—it is Communism. You

in England do not know what Communism means. You have not a single Communist M.P. We have actual proof that on a certain night all the lights in Berlin would have gone out. Then came the firing of the Reichstag. Can you wonder that we have 700,000 auxiliary troops? They are not armed. They are not Reichswehr. They could not keep order if they were. The psychology would be wrong. What is the alternative to Hitler? Communism. If Hitler goes, Communism comes in. Brüning? My dear Mr. Bernays, he is hopeless. No magnetism; charming, but oh, so feeble! He is not a political leader. Hitler has the power of organising and inspiring. He is what your Lloyd George was in the war. Hitler will co-operate with anyone to meet Communism and war. It is like a ship—when all goes well, all the passengers quarrel among themselves; then the fire breaks out and they are all one. Hitler realises the ramifications of the ship and that we are all in the same boat."

He was much concerned with the anti-German feeling in London. He picked up a copy of the *Sphere* that was on his desk and pointed indignantly to the picture of an effigy of Hitler at Madame Tussaud's derisively daubed with red paint. "Is that the way to establish good relations?"

I tried to tell him something of the atmosphere in England—how we were really shocked at the outrages on personal liberty; how we were not a military people; how reluctantly we had entered the war; what the efforts we had put forward to win it meant to us; and that now, rightly or wrongly, we saw the same spirit of intolerance and aggressive militarism that had taken us four and a half years to destroy rising once more in all its terrible ferocity and fervour. "Can you wonder that we are angry and downright alarmed?"

I thought that I had made some impression, for he appeared interested. "Come and see for yourself," I said. "It is not necessary," he said; "you have explained it"—and there was no hint of irony in his voice. I seized this favourable moment to ask whether I might see Hitler. "Why, of course," he said. "But let me tell him something

about you." "I am a Nationalist M.P.," I said—though I wonder what the chief Government Whip would say to my claim. "Who is your leader?" he asked. It was a poser. For one wild moment I thought of saying Lloyd George. It is the irony of the situation that the chief architect in the downfall of the old Germany is the most popular figure in the New Germany. But truth overcame journalistic ambition. I also feared that I might be found out.

The moment that I said Sir Herbert Samuel I knew that all chances of seeing Hitler had gone. A few days later a friend met Hammstaengl and asked him whether he was getting an interview for me with the Chancellor. "Do you think that I am going to get an interview for a sow of a Jew?" was the reply. Two days later Rosita Forbes who, after all, had no connection with English politics, was received by Hitler without any difficulty. She had no Jewish ancestors.

So I did not get my interview with Hitler, but the efforts to secure it had told me a good deal about the outlook and mentality of those around him. It is a real tragedy that there is so little contact between the Nazis and the British. Even the resident journalists, if their newspapers are critical of the régime, have no contact among the Nazi Ministers. The British Embassy itself has little but formal relations with them.

A few weeks later the German delegation to the Economic Conference in London threatened to decline at the last moment a dinner invitation which they had previously accepted because they heard that Sir Austen Chamberlain was to be one of the guests.

## CHAPTER XLII

### FRONTIER INJUSTICES

**B**UT THE GERMAN mentality is not so difficult to understand when one grasps something of what they have suffered. From Berlin we set off to explore the eastern frontier. We chose Beuthen, which had a worse reputation than any other town as a purgatory for the Jews. We did not see any Jew-beating, but we saw something of the frontier-baiting that has done so much to create this ugly temper. Beuthen is a mining town. Up to 1918 it was fifty miles away from the border ; now it is surrounded on three sides by frontier posts. Upper Silesia is still bleeding from the crude amputations of Versailles. It is an unnatural frontier. The line cuts right through the coalfields. The tram-road between Kattowitz and Beuthen seems as humdrum as that between Huddersfield and Leeds, or Pudsey and Otley. Then half-way along is the frontier post. In come the German guards ; passports are examined, and the contents of purses scrutinised, for nobody is allowed to take out more than thirty marks. The tram jerks on a few yards further. The Poles come in. All the Germans have to get out to be searched for contraband goods—the men in one cabin, and the women in another. The same process operates on the return journey. It must be exasperating to the German patriots who remember the days when it was possible to travel from one town to another without let or hindrance. The Germans outside Beuthen are compelled to have, not merely a passport, but a visa. It is as if, as the result of a war, Birkenhead was separated from Liverpool. It is worse, for at least in that case there would be the natural frontier of the Mersey.

Something is being done to heal the wounds by the transfer of populations. Kattowitz is now only about thirty per cent German, and Beuthen is ten per cent Polish. But the frontier has been drawn with apparently deliberate

insensitiveness to German feelings. Not merely have the best coalfields been scooped by the Poles, but the frontier has been arranged to include in Polish territory a famous hospital. The first task of the Germans in Beuthen after the Treaty was to build another hospital.

There is intense feeling between the Poles and the Germans. There are no mixed marriages, and little social life. This is due to some little extent to the extraordinary difficulty of the Polish language. The Poles have no real affinity with the Germans. They tend to be feckless, showy, dirty. One sees it in Kattowitz. They use newspapers instead of dishes, and paper instead of window-panes.

In some ways the Jews are better treated in Upper Silesia, owing to the power of the League of Nations to interfere for the protection of minorities. But the Jews have lost their official jobs, like doctoring at the orphanage, and their panel practice. They have lost contracts, too, like that of supplying the municipality with drink and other commodities. There is, of course, no compensation. The boycotting of the Jewish shops continues. I saw Nazis standing outside a restaurant and taking the names of those who went in. Here economics are restoring reason. Inhabitants come in from a neighbouring town to buy from Jewish shops, where they will not be known, because they are cheaper than the rest. It shows that the boycott was imposed from above, to some extent at any rate. But I found evidence of a good deal of unofficial persecution. The Jews were allowed to bathe only on Fridays. They were banished from the municipal tennis-courts, and insulted at dances, so that they had to seek their amusements across the border. The situation is somewhat improved by the fact that the Catholics, on the whole, are more tolerant. They are not as bitterly nationalist. After all, the Pope is an Italian.

The worst case of frontier bitterness we found in Lower Silesia, which we visited the next day. For the slicing of this territory from Germany there seems no justification on grounds of self-determination. There was no official plebiscite. A voluntary plebiscite produced a ninety-four



per cent poll in favour of remaining within Germany. Yet it was torn away, and fourteen years afterwards the wounds are still visible. This is not a little due to the harshness of the Poles. They make the gulf of the frontier as wide as possible. For example, two brothers live opposite one another : in order for the one in Poland to visit the one in Germany five minutes away, he has to go thirty miles round to get a visa, and another twenty miles to find a controlled road.

There are ludicrous inconveniences which the Poles make as exasperating as possible. We heard of a peasant who had fields in Poland and left his coat in Germany, and was arrested because he had not got a passport. We heard of a brother imprisoned for talking to a brother over the ditch. I admit that much of this was probably exaggerated—like the early stories from Belgium of the English nurse with her hands cut off. Still it is an intolerable situation when a German farmer has to get passports for his horses every four weeks in order to plough on his Polish land. Horse smuggling is incidentally a big industry here, for a horse worth fifty marks in Poland can be sold for three hundred in Germany. One farmer complained that his ducks were on one occasion confiscated because they waddled off into a Polish pond.

We saw ten miles of deserted railway. Owing to reasons of military strategy the Poles refuse to open it. No train has passed down it since 1921. Great highways in old days across Germany have now become choked with grass when they approach the frontier. It was striking evidence of how the new frontiers freeze up intercourse.

It was lovely country—cornfields, forests, market towns, with real castles and cobbled streets, and not a motor-car or a petrol station. But there is intense bitterness. It was significant that as we came away a group of boisterous Breslau students was trooping off to examine the problem at first hand, literally “clamouring at the gates of the lost provinces.”

I admit that during this time we were in the hands of

German propagandists, who no doubt make the most of all this. It is equally true that wherever the frontier is drawn there are bound to be inconveniences and injustices.

But many of them would be relieved by sympathetic administration. A new boundary commission is overdue. At worst there are not more, probably, than thirty thousand involved in this area. A limited revision would go a long way to ease the situation. It has been done on a minute scale. In 1921 two villages changed hands. The one that expressed the wish to be Polish was exchanged for the one that wished to become German.

At present this frontier is in a needless state of tension. It is magnificent war propaganda. I fully realise how ticklish is the question of revision in general. There can be no rearrangement of frontier unless there can be in it some guarantee of finality. But it is worth devoting every ounce of energy and resource to seeing whether such accommodation is within the bounds of practical politics.

Short of the Reichstag at the time of its suppression, I discovered no more powerful reason for the rise of a militant Nazism than the German-Polish frontier.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### BEHIND THE BARBED WIRE

"BRESLAU is the worst place for atrocities," said an English journalist to us in Berlin. "We cannot get any news from it at all," added another. "There is an iron curtain of censorship. It is impossible to find out what is going on there." We were at the Taverne, the café where all the English journalists gather in the evening after their stories have been telephoned through to their London offices. It is a fascinating place—the clearing-house of all the political gossip of Germany, and, as such, infested with spies. Every visitor passing through Berlin with something to tell or something to learn is sure of a welcome at the journalists' table. You can tell the newcomer by the fact that he speaks in ordinary tones. He has not yet learnt that walls have ears and that there are such things as *agents provocateurs*. I thought at first that all this conspiratorial atmosphere was the invention of excited and rattled journalists. I had not been in the country more than a few days before I realised the grim necessity for it. The foreign correspondents are in danger, if not of personal violence, at any rate of a trumped-up charge of espionage.

It is that which brings them so close together. I have never met with a corps of correspondents that had such a remarkable sense of *camaraderie*. There is no jealousy or back-biting. There is a very real sense that they are one body, determined to discover the truth and, whatever the cost, make it known. They looked upon me, not as a rival, but as a co-worker, and I received the greatest kindness and assistance from them. When they gave me the line on Breslau I knew that it was the one place which we must not miss.

It was the evening of Whit-Sunday when we arrived there, and all next day, as far as our investigations were concerned,

was a complete blank. It was as if a foreigner had arrived in Sheffield on a Bank Holiday and expected to be shown over the steel-works. We had introductions, but, when we telephoned them, the bell rang with that hopeless emptiness that one associates with London when all one's friends are in the country. Breslau might conceal nameless horrors, but it looked, that Whit-Monday, as harmless as Bristol on a Sunday afternoon. We saw Nazis collecting funds in one of the leading cafés as courteously as if they were hospital students in London, and obvious Jews refusing to contribute openly, almost brazenly. From the point of view of our enquiries it seemed a waste of time to remain there, and we determined to push on to Nuremburg that night. But at the last moment we changed our minds, when the hotel porter came to fetch down our bags, and decided to give Breslau another chance. It was a wise move, for the next day produced the most interesting experience of our trip.

The following morning I attempted a long shot. Breslau was under the control of Herr Heines, the man who had, so far as the atrocities were concerned, the most evil reputation in all Germany. He had been one of the heroes of the famous Munich *Putsch* in 1923—that desperate enterprise when a gang of desperadoes, with Hitler at their head, attempted to storm the town hall. Hitler was sent to prison, where he wrote *Mein Kampf*, and Heines had been wounded and was also sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. Could I get an interview with him? More difficult still, was it possible to get a permit to see over the notorious concentration camp? Quite shamelessly I dropped the Liberal from the description of my political activities, and in my application, which was made through the usual channels, styled myself a “National” member of the English House of Commons. The trick worked. To my intense surprise, I struck oil. I was informed that Herr Heines would receive me that afternoon. Accompanied by an English resident, a Jew who had married a German Jewess, we set off for the Police Presidency. It was a wonderful building, almost as large as the County Hall, in marble and oak—obviously built in

the time of the inflation. The official who received us sent a cold shiver down my back. He was horribly scarred and had a twitching head. He was the sort of man I could imagine guilty of any cruelty. As we waited to be taken into the Presence, he pointed out derisively the elegance of the rooms and the furnishing. "You see how the late régime spent the people's money," he said.

Herr Heines, when we were eventually taken into him, appeared a charming fellow—young, about thirty-five years of age, fair hair, blue eyes, smiling, boyish. He was dressed in a very smart Nazi uniform, with a tunic and red tabs on it like an English staff officer. In attendance was a young good-looking aide-de-camp, with long, drooping eyelashes and a gold wrist-watch. As Herr Heines talked, the young man kept fingering his master's uniform—pulling down a sleeve or putting a badge straight.

But, for all that, he was a fine figure of a man—broad shoulders, immensely strong, and with a hand-shake that was positively crippling. As he told me the story—by then becoming painfully familiar to me—of the rise of the Nazi Party as the protest of flaming youth against the devilish Communist conspiracy, he reminded me of nothing so much as the captain of a rugger fifteen who has just been made head of the school. He was so gloriously self-confident, so naïvely exultant in his new sense of power. I could well understand his platform appeal to militant youth. He had all the attributes that make for hero-worship.

I asked him about the persecution of the Jews. His answer was that Jewish money was behind the Communists and that was the reason for the attack on them. He then launched into the usual anti-Semite tirade. Like all the Nazi leaders, he spoke extraordinarily well. I listened without comment. It is the first essential of a journalist that he should never argue or appear to take sides. I learnt that in my interviews with Gandhi. There was nothing that shut him up quicker than the feeling that he was in a hostile atmosphere. But my companion with the German Jewish wife most foolishly intervened, and there was a heated argument

between them on the rights and wrongs of the atrocities. It was futile, because it was like arguing with an uneducated Catholic the fundamentals of his faith. It was also extremely dangerous. Herr Heines was getting angry, and I remembered my friend's German wife, whom I had met that morning. They both wanted to get out of Germany as quickly as possible, but there was trouble about British passports. They wanted me to take the matter up with the Foreign Office as soon as I returned. I registered a mental vow that I would write to Anthony Eden that night.

Heines was saying something to his young friend which I did not catch, and the creature with the twitching head had an ugly gleam in his eye. It was clear that delay was dangerous. Both my companion and his German wife and their children are now out of Germany. Otherwise I would not tell this story.

To bring the conversation back to less immediately dangerous topics, I asked if it was possible for us to see the concentration camp. "Of course," Heines said. "Come along now." So in a few minutes we were being packed into luxurious open cars—the Nazi leaders do themselves extremely well—and were being driven at break-neck speed to the concentration camp. Our progress was a mixture of a fire-engine and a distinguished general's car in the war. Traffic scattered from our path in all directions, and on the pavements hands went up in the Nazi salute. Heines sat in front and talked to us over his shoulder. He seemed disappointed that I was a member of the "Lower" House, but brightened up when he recalled that "of course, it also contained Mr. Lloyd George."

Perhaps I had better pause in my narrative and try and explain exactly what a concentration camp is. It is the prison where Jews, Socialists, pacifists, Liberals—anyone who has engaged in political agitation or is believed to be hostile to the New Germany—are incarcerated without trial and for an indefinite period. The German name is *Schutzhaft* (protective detention), the idea being that they are asylums

provided by a good, kind Government for men who otherwise might suffer grievous bodily harm for their political opinions at the hands of their infuriated countrymen. They are scattered all over Germany. The number of prisoners in concentration camps cannot be less than fifty thousand. I will try and set down exactly what I saw from the notes I made the same evening.

In appearance, Breslau concentration camp is exactly like one of the camps erected in England for German prisoners during the war. About two miles out of the town, alongside a railway embankment, we came to a square compound of barbed wire. Inside were two long huts of the type that might have been used in happier days for holiday camps. In one of them lived the prison guard.

We went inside, and I saw my first prisoner. He was wearing a white sling, and said that his arm had been broken. "Accident, of course?" asked the Police President. The man nodded his head. A friend who was with us whispered, "I saw a man with his arm in a sling last week. It was a different man from this, but it also was the result of an accident."

The other hut accommodated the prisoners. They were out at work, and all we could see was two tiers of beds very close together on each side of the room, about one hundred and fifty in all. We then went out to inspect the working-party. Dressed in dungarees and forage-caps, they were engaged in turning a marshy waste into a municipal swimming-bath. Guards stood on a kind of slag-heap at each end, with rifles slung over their shoulders. "Shot whilst trying to escape" is a frequent official explanation of prisoners who have entered a concentration camp and have never been heard of again.

We stood on a mound—Heines, with his staff, rather like a general viewing a battle. To prove how humane was the prison discipline, Heines started summoning prisoners before us at random. First came a spectacled Jew, unshaven but otherwise in a reasonably healthy condition. What did he have to eat? "Meat and potatoes." And for the

second meal of the day? "Rice." "What, nothing else?" snapped Heines. "Well, potatoes," admitted the prisoner. The work was hard at first, he replied, but he was getting used to it. He was dismissed.

Another shout, and an elderly man who had been working at a pump came up at the double, clicked his heels, and stood to attention in the best military fashion. He too asserted, under cross-examination, that he had been well treated, that the food was good, though at the beginning there was a shortage of bread, but it was all right now.

"That was the late Mayor of Breslau," said Herr Heines as the prisoner returned to the pump.

The former Police President of Breslau was also at work somewhere down there in the embryo swimming-bath. Half the members of the late civic administration in Breslau seemed to be there. One gets used to these bewildering changes of fortune in a country which does not recognise the principle of "His Majesty's Opposition," and where prison is the alternative to office.

"You see," said the Police President, as we walked away, "how well they are treated. I was in prison myself three years, and I know what prisons can be like." But I might have answered, "Herr Heines, you were in prison because you were convicted of murder [he had murdered a Communist, but was let out after three years]. The only crime these men have committed is that they don't think as you do. The atrocity is the concentration camp itself." But, being a guest, I kept silence, and also having no desire to create an awkward by-election in North Bristol, for Heines had a punch that could have sent me reeling into the swimming-bath below.

"This is the only concentration camp in Silesia, and for this they isolate Germany," he said.

"How do the prisoners occupy their time in the evenings?" I asked.

"They read the Nazi papers and Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and then the camp is fitted up with wireless so that they can listen in to Hitler's speeches." There was not a gleam of a



smile on any face in the *entourage*. Sardonic humour is not a characteristic of the German. But I thought of a new inferno—a place where Mr. Maxton is condemned in perpetuity to listen to the broadcast addresses of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. My last memory of the camp is of prisoners watering the flowers behind the barbed wire. They had been planted in the shape of a swastika. We had seen no actual evidence of cruelty, and yet we had the haunting sensation of nameless evils in that camp. What abominations were hidden behind that barbed wire? It was not hysteria on our part. The camp has since been closed down. The stories about it were too ugly even for the Nazis.

The strangest experience came last. I motored back to Breslau with the Police President, escorted by a police car, amid a fusillade of "*Heil, Hitler!*" from the crowds along the pavement, until we came to the working-class districts, where there was a significant silence. Arrived at the Brown House, Herr Heines's young friend was sent on ahead—as Frank Milton whispered to me, "Presumably to clean up the blood"—and we were taken round an empty hospital on the other side of the road. A boy got in our way. For the moment Heines was off his guard. He shouted out something that sounded strangely like "Get out of my way, you swine!" But in a moment he was all smiles again. I recalled the story I had heard the night before—that it was Heines's practice to make surprise visits to cafés, to round up his Brown Shirts, armed with a riding-whip.

Ten minutes later we came back to the Brown House and began the tour. It was all most impressive—a cross between a barracks and a boy scouts' hostel. There was a gymnasium, a reading-room, a dining-hall, a dormitory with photographs of Herr Heines plastered over each locker, and in the back yard a large sow. Most of the boys were in Nazi uniform. But two were in shirt-sleeves and ragged trousers. They were brought up to us as prize exhibits. They were young Communists who were learning the error of their ways. Heines put them through a short catechism. Had they been Communists? "Yes, sir." Did they realise how wrong they

had been? "Yes, sir." Would they be good Nazis now? "Yes, sir. *Heil, Hitler!*"

Heines smiled indulgently at them and told them that in another three months' time, if they continued to be good boys, they would be allowed their brown shirts. It all sounded delightful, like those imaginary conversations in Liberal pamphlets where Mrs. Common Sense is interviewed by the Liberal candidate, confesses that she is tempted to vote Labour, has all her arguments prettily upset, and ends by promising to vote Liberal for the rest of her life.

I was a little sceptical about it all, and when we came to the Police President's office I asked how much these young Nazis were paid, and, if they were not paid, how they managed to buy their uniforms. His answer was to stride to the window and shout down into the street. A moment later there was a clatter on the stairs and twenty boys burst into the room. They lined up along the wall and stood to attention. It was then explained to them that a gentleman from London asked how much they were paid to be Nazis. "Do you get paid?" "*Nein,*" they shouted in chorus. "And you provide your uniforms, don't you?" "Yes," they said as one boy. "We pay fifty pfennigs a week for them." They were then dismissed like puppies who performed their tricks creditably to their master.

While this charade was being played for my benefit, I had time to study the President's office. On the walls were pictures of the Nazi leaders, a framed post-card of Hitler written from gaol, and photographs festooned with black *crêpe* of Nazi martyrs—Horst Wessel, who had been murdered by a Communist, and Schlageter, who had blown up a French troop train in occupied territory. On his desk was a vase of flowers and one framed photograph, which he handed me with a smile of pride. It was of five rather good-looking boys, and for a moment I thought they were his sons. Then he explained, and I recalled the famous case of a year ago. The facts are undisputed. Five young men at Beuthen had clubbed to death a Communist. Owing to political clamour,

they were reprieved by von Papen. The photograph that held the place of honour on the desk of the Police President of Breslau and all Silesia was that of the five Beuthen murderers.

That is the whole difficulty of the Nazi movement. So many of the leaders are promoted thugs. I cannot exaggerate the feeling of revulsion that I experienced when meeting some of the Nazi leaders. They had homo-sexuality and sadism written all over them, and their *entourage* was of the kind I would not willingly be seen with in England. This, of course, is not true of all of them. There are in the movement some really fine men, aflame with enthusiasm, full of self-sacrifice, ready to serve with the full measure of devotion the cause of German regeneration. The trouble is that Hitler has to reward those who joined him first in the days when he was an outlaw.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### THE NAZIS AND THE JEWS

**P**ERHAPS it would be well to sum up here the results of my chief investigation in Germany, which was into the plight of the Jews. There is nothing so wearisome as the cry of the persecuted. When it is first heard, it is news, even sensational news ; sympathy is aroused ; tempers flame up ; something must be done about it, and that quickly. Then comes the counter-propaganda : the atrocities have been exaggerated ; the victims were very provocative ; the outrages were only committed in the heat of the moment, and in any case the whole question is rather a bore.

That is the history of public outcries against persecution from the Crusades to Gladstone's " Pilgrimage of Passion." It was true even of the invasion of Belgium. I am just old enough to remember the wave of indignation that swept through Great Britain at the first news of the sack of Louvain — " That holocaust of irreparable treasures," as Mr. Asquith called it in his Guildhall speech, " lit up by blind barbarian vengeance." Within a few months it was the fashionable joke of the day for one woman to ask another, with reference to a Belgian refugee staying in her house, whether she had met " our latest Belgian atrocity ? "

For all that, my most poignant memory of my recent visits to Germany is of the plight of the Jews. It was impossible to get away from it. Wherever one went, the tale of persecution lengthened.

I make no claim to be in a position to give an *ex-cathedra* opinion on the position of the Jews in Germany. I am merely giving, for what they are worth, the results of a few weeks' intensive enquiry.

I purposely delayed my visit until it was possible to get the situation into some kind of perspective. The favourite argument of the Nazis in excuse for the outrages has always

been that it was not a change of Government but a revolution, and that in a revolution there are inevitable excesses.

At the time of my next visit, revolution was already four months away. The din and dust were subsiding, and it was possible to estimate which side of the persecution was mere revolutionary excess and which a permanent and deliberate item of policy.

Physical violence had to a great extent disappeared. I saw Jews in Berlin in large numbers down the Kurfürstendamm, walking about quite unmolested. The beatings were enormously diminished. I did hear of them, and, indeed, met one victim who had, only a few days before, been given a bad time in the Brown House. But it was not much more than schoolboy bullying. Nazis not out of their teens had made them run races, threatening to shoot the one who was last, and compelled them to do physical jerks, however old and feeble they were. My informant had seen two Communists thrashed. And again it was a schoolboy beating. Half-way through, the Nazi with the cane had said, "I have forgotten how many strokes I have given; I must start again," rather in the manner of a prefect in a bad house at a bad school.

Many of the atrocities were indeed the work of these boys. The crime of the German Government was that it connived at them. The police were forbidden to intervene. The atrocities, also, were very often due to the settling of some private score. The Jews were very often the money-lenders, and they were threatened with the alternative of a beating or the forgiveness of the debt—and frequently received the one while having to agree to the other.

But, with some exceptions, these unauthorised atrocities had ceased. There is also little interference with freedom to worship. In only one case did I hear of the violation of a synagogue. Such restrictions as there are have relation to kosher. The preparation of such meat is forbidden in Germany. It has to be imported from Denmark at the equivalent of 1s. 8d. instead of 10d. per pound.

The attack on the Jews has taken a different direction,

but I cannot say that it is being conducted with any less severity. I use the present tense deliberately, for, though my investigations were made some months ago, I have reason to know that the situation remains tragically unaltered. The atrocities to-day are more calculated and systematic than in the first few weeks. Perhaps the worst form they take is incarceration in a concentration camp. I am bound to say that I did not hear of any Jews being imprisoned as such. They were there because they had in some way or another been avowed opponents of the Government, and were alleged to have carried on activities against it.

I heard it frequently argued that the Jews owed their lamentable position in the Hitler State to their having invariably, when engaged in political activity, joined the parties of the Left. But what other parties could they have joined? The Nationalists, as representing the old order of Imperialist Germany, would not have them. To the Nazis they were an abomination. Though some of them voted for the Centre Party under Dr. Bruening, the fact that it was the Catholic Party made it impossible for any Jew to have a career in it. So there were only left to them the *Volkspartei* and the *Staatpartei*—the two wings of the old Liberal Party, which was in its death agony—the Social Democratic Party, and the Communists. It was therefore inevitable that the revolution, when it came, should find the Jews in the political parties opposed to it, and that, in consequence, not a few of them would find themselves in the concentration camps.

But quite as bad as the concentration camps are the regulations directly introduced by the Government against the Jews. Their purpose is to deprive the Jews of all means of livelihood. It is an economic drive, and it is increasing in severity. A campaign of slow starvation is succeeding the campaign of terror.

I do not want to exaggerate. The really rich are enabled to continue their avocations practically unmolested. Hitler is terrified of a depreciation of the mark.

But for how long? It seemed incredible at one time that Hitler would ever dare to attack the Catholics, who represent a third of the German population. But he has done so. Dr. Wassermann has thought it politic to resign from the board of the Dresdner Bank. It may well be the turn of the great banking interests next for summary expulsion. But for the moment they are safe.

The chief victims of the persecution are the professional classes. Most of them are not merely without jobs, but without any hope of getting them. It was rather pathetic, when I rang up Jewish professional men to whom I had been given an introduction, that I always found them at home and ready to talk at any length, for they had nothing else to do. What is the situation in regard to them? They, after all, form the bulk of the Jewish community—lawyers, doctors, professors, small shopkeepers, students, and minor employees in offices. There are not many Jews in Germany who are working men in the sense that we use the term in this country.

All State employment is closed to them. This extends to the medical profession, where no panel patient can be attended by a Jewish doctor. As regards lawyers, at first the number of those who were allowed to practise was reduced to the exact proportion of their number to the whole population of Germany—that is, one per cent. This has since been modified to the extent of admitting those Jews who actually fought in the war, and those who were in practice before the war. This exemption from the ban does not apply to their sons.

The position varies in different parts of the country. In Berlin it is the best, for about half the lawyers are allowed to practise. Even then the privilege is not of much account, for no Aryan German will employ them. For instance, if they try to recover money for a client, the chances are he will receive a letter from the debtor—"Do you think that I am going to have any dealings with Jewish lawyers? Employ a German lawyer, and then I will talk business." A Jewish lawyer has lost the case before he enters the court.

Jewish professors have been dismissed almost *en bloc* from

the universities. The only important exception is at Frankfurt, where, owing to the fact that the Jews form such a large proportion of the population, the persecution has been more temperate.

In business there have been wholesale dismissals. The boycott of the shops, though officially confined to one day, still continues. Here again it varies in severity from town to town. In Breslau the British Consul took me down the main street, and pointed out shop after shop which had been bankrupted. There were notices up everywhere—"Buy From German Shops." In Cologne it was more authoritative, for the walls were still plastered with notices—"Don't Buy From the Jews." We were told that these dated back to the April boycott. More significant was the presence of women pickets outside the Jewish shops, with placards inscribed, "Buy German Goods." What saves the Jewish shops from complete collapse is that, on the whole, they provide goods cheaper than do the others. Thus at Beuthen we found that the women of a neighbouring market town came in to buy their week's supply from Jewish shops, where they would not be known, and therefore would not suffer any consequences.

The Jewish boycott must not be confused with the general drive against the big shops, which is part of the Nazi unemployment programme. It is the deliberate policy of the Government to restore to the small shopkeeper some of the trade he has lost to the big stores. It is Chestertonian Distributism—the re-creation of a property-owning bourgeoisie.

The position of the Jewish students is lamentable. They are forbidden, in most of the universities, to take their degrees. They are thus suspended in mid-career. Schoolboys are forbidden to matriculate. With regard to the schools, it is impossible to make any very precise statement. The decree has gone forth that the schools shall be limited to a one per cent flat quota of Jewish pupils. The persecution has been pretty bad there—Jewish children forced to sing the "Horst Wessel Lied," tormented by the teachers, and isolated by the other children. But it all varies very much with the town



and the teacher. Only in Breslau, and there only in one school, did we hear that the Jewish children had been deliberately segregated at the back of the room.

In general I have no doubt that the drive against the Jews is increasing in ferocity. Whole families are being thrown out of employment, and everywhere there is a lengthening tale of suicides. Nazi leaders with whom I spoke argued that the Government was slowing up on the Jewish boycott. I saw no signs of it. How can they? There are anything from two to four million who, if not professing Jews themselves, have parents, or even grandparents, who were Jews, for the ban only stops at the third generation. The deprivation of their jobs means employment for the Nazis. I can see no hope of a concord with Hitler.

The persecution of the Jews has given Hitler something like half a million jobs with which to reward his followers.

Another serious factor in the situation is that the attack on the Jews is undoubtedly popular with the mass of the Nazis. The major persecution directed from Berlin has been followed up with tyrannies in the provinces, which, though on the face of it of minor importance, are often harder to bear. The loss of a job is, after all, a tragedy on the grand scale. But the Germans go further. They do not merely deprive the Jews of their livelihood—they hold them up to ridicule and contempt. Restaurants are labelled, "No Jews Admitted." At Nuremberg the advertisements at a municipal fair contained the warning that no Jews would be allowed to visit it. Their societies, however harmless, are closed down. In Munich alone, twenty non-political Jewish societies have been suppressed. Forbidden to form associations of their own, Jews are being expelled from the clubs which were non-Jewish. A well-known citizen of Nuremberg showed me a letter in which his resignation from the local singing club, "in the present circumstances," was requested. Socially there is complete ostracism.

The Jews in Germany are in an intolerable position. They are accused of being non-national, and yet they are forbidden to assimilate with the Nationals. They are in a trap.

They cannot even make employment for themselves. In Frankfurt, the wife of a local lawyer who had lost his practice, and was faced with destitution, started a fruit-stall in the streets. At first she did well, for her neighbours were sympathetic. Then the police stepped in and forbade the stall. Hitler, they said, was not attacking the big shops in order to create small shopkeepers among the Jews.

Hitler talked about suicides before he came into power ; they are nothing compared with the suicides which are taking place now. When I was in Frankfurt an old couple of eighty took their lives. They just could not bear the situation any longer. That is typical of what we heard in every town we visited. It is inevitable when the sources of livelihood are cut off. So far as employment is concerned their plight cannot be exaggerated. It is not a question of one man being out of a job. A whole family is put on the dole. Nor is it a question of a temporary disaster. The ordinary Jews have less chance of employment than an habitual criminal in this country.

Is there any excuse for these outrages ? Here is a community that has committed no crime ; has paid its taxes ; has served faithfully in good positions ; has fought in the war as gallantly as its neighbours. Why should they be classed, with lunatics and criminals, as men debarred from the opportunity of an honourable livelihood ?

The main contention is, first, that the German Jews are fundamentally anti-national, secondly, that they are all in the best jobs, and, thirdly, that there was a particularly undesirable element that came in from Poland after the war.

There is something in the contention that the German Jews have made little attempt to understand the German national psychology. They have tended to have rather a mocking, cynical, destructive kind of outlook—wholly at variance with the robust patriotism and simplicity of life of the ordinary German. It has been unfortunate that, since the war, the best seats at the theatre, the most expensive restaurants, the most luxurious cars, have been in the possession of the Jews. There was a night-life in

Berlin that was peculiarly unsavoury, and a series of plays on the stage, which, though clever and original, had in some cases better not have been produced. Whether the Jews were responsible for the night-life in Germany or not—and I think the charge is greatly exaggerated—it is true that they had an almost complete grip on the entertainment industries, as, indeed, they have at the present moment in this country.

Undoubtedly they have had a share of the professions out of all proportion to their numbers. At the Berlin Bar, for instance, though the Jews only represented four per cent of the population, they were sixty per cent of the legal profession. In Nuremberg it was more glaring—representing two per cent of the population, they were fifty-one per cent of the legal profession. It was the same in the medical profession. Hospitals were often completely staffed by Jews. Admittedly they had won their position by merit. Many non-Jews admitted that if they were ill they would go to a Jewish doctor, or in trouble to a Jewish lawyer. Jews swept the board of prizes at the schools, and, in consequence, were unpopular with the other boys. The power of patronage was in some cases used very unwisely. The head of a hospital, if he was a Jew, would often only appoint Jews.

There is deep down in the German mentality an inferiority complex. Allied to it is the vice—detected by Tacitus in his *Germania*—of *invidia*—envy of anyone more fortunate. These characteristics are not a little responsible for the outrages. They in no way excuse them, but they do to some extent explain them.

If the Jews have been at fault at all, it is that they have been blind to the signs of the times. It was a mistake, for instance, so openly to profit out of the inflation—to buy up houses on the bargain counter, and then let them at extortionate rents. A story I heard everywhere was that in an acute housing shortage the Jews were quite unaffected.

Of course stories of this kind could be paralleled in England, particularly during the recent slump. The Jews seem to suffer less in a time of adversity—that is no doubt the

secret of their survival down the ages. I am told that whole districts in the Regent's Park neighbourhood are now occupied by Jews who have done well out of the trade depression. It was most unfortunate, too, that in the recent fire trial the dock at the Old Bailey should resemble a ghetto. There is a certain ruthlessness about the dismissal by Jews of their employees. I had the experience myself of being congratulated by a Jew one week on the championship of his community in the House of Commons, and the next week having a genuine tale of woe poured out to me by one of his sacked employees.

I think that the English Jews must realise that there is an anti-Semite feeling in this country. A fierce, even an unfair, light beats upon them. As one young Jewish friend said to me recently, "When the Jewish community produces an Einstein, you say that he is the heritage of the world, but when one of our number is convicted of some unsavoury crime, you say, 'These damned Jews.'" It is true, and it is well that the Jewish community should realise that it is true.

Not that I think that the Germans had a scintilla of justification for their crimes against the Jewish community. When the whole case that they present against the German Jews is added up, it does not amount to more than the ordinary anti-Semite prejudices of a chatty season-ticket holder in a first-class carriage on the Brighton line. If everything I heard against the Jews in Germany was true their treatment at the hand of the Germans remains an outrage on civilisation.

What can England do? Keep up the moral pressure. In contrast to France the voice of Great Britain counts, particularly that of the Christian Churches and non-Jewish public men. The effect of Sir Austen Chamberlain's speech was enormous. There is something to be said for an unofficial boycott of German goods. The Jews as a community might well refuse to deal directly or indirectly in German goods. Something of the kind has already been done, and it is having an effect. Industrialists are warning Hitler that they are losing orders as a result of the persecution, especially in

America. There is a process, for instance, by which yarn exported from Bradford goes through a finishing process in Germany before re-export to the U.S.A. I was informed that there is now so little sale for it in America, since it bears the mark, "Made in Germany," that plans are already on foot to transfer the factory to France. The Nazis are well aware that the only threat to their power is rising unemployment figures.

An official boycott by the Jewish community has, of course, its dangers. It might damage British trade, and lead to an anti-Semite feeling here. It would damage the influence that the quiet and private representations of the British Government have had already on the slowing down of the persecution. It is an open secret that it was owing to the protests of the British Government that the official German boycott of Jewish shops was confined to one day. Many German Jews with whom I discussed the idea of a boycott were strongly against it.

A relief fund far larger than its existing total is urgently needed. About a third of the Jewish population is faced with destitution. At present relief is being provided by the Jewish community. The German Jews have been living on their resources. But these are diminishing.

The question naturally arises, Cannot the Jews look after their own? For the moment they are doing so, but the problem is of such size that I do not think that it is possible for them to do it indefinitely, or on the scale required.

I suggest that at least a portion of the money raised should be devoted to immediate relief. There are all sorts of purposes for which even a little money would be of enormous assistance in relieving distress, which the German relief fund does not at present touch. For instance, as regards children : funds, easy of access, for the purpose of providing fares for journeys ; and likewise, in extreme cases, for the mothers to visit concentration camps to obtain the necessary signature of father on application forms for travel permits. Further investigation of possibilities of transferring children from one district or town to another where they will no longer

be subject to continual persecution by former playmates on account of Jewish blood or parents' former political opinions.

Discreet enquiries on this subject have led to the conviction that there are many homes for this purpose, if the necessary funds were there to meet the increased household expenditure. This would probably be far better than emigration, which must almost inevitably lead to de-nationalisation.

Then a sum of money for those who go in daily fear of re-arrest and physical danger, and who are therefore compelled to remain in hiding, leaving their own resources of money and property for fear of detection.

But the greater part of the relief should take the form of assisted emigration to Palestine, or any other country that would be willing to receive them. There are tracts in north-east France, depopulated by the war, where there are opportunities for land settlement. It might be a satisfactory way out of the colonies difficulty to make the old German colony of Tanganyika a place of refuge for German Jews.

Every effort should be made to persuade the High Commissioners of the Dominions to give facilities for Jewish immigration. There is no doubt that it would give their professional classes—lawyers, doctors, and, above all, university professors—a needed strengthening.

Action, swift and searching, is vital. There have been approximately eight thousand Jews a year leaving the universities. To-day there are no possible avenues of employment. Indeed the worst side of the persecution is this shutting of the doors of hope against youth.

But help must be co-ordinated. A central committee is not merely needed in this country, but in the rest of the world—under a man of the calibre of General Smuts. It is imperative, in my judgment, that contact should be effectively opened up with the leading Jews of the world and the leading Jews of Germany.

I have tried to give the bare facts of the Jewish persecution, stripped of any rhetoric. That does not mean that I was unmoved by what I saw. Though not a Jew by religion—and only remotely by race ; I think even in Germany I should

escape the branding-iron—I cannot exaggerate my horror and detestation of what has occurred. Perhaps the cruellest aspect of the persecution is the fear that it has inevitably inspired. I cannot get out of my mind, even now, the expression of terror on the faces of so many with whom we talked—in some cases unreasonable, but horribly real to them all the same—decent kindly folk starting at sounds, afraid to talk, suspecting their nearest neighbours; fathers, who have pledged themselves to bring up their families in a decent standard of comfort, in hopeless and helpless idleness; young men, on the threshold of manhood, doomed to endless unemployment—and not merely the material losses, but the general affront to human dignity involved in the declaration of a great community as trespassers in the land of their birth and upbringing. It is inhuman. It was with a wonderful sense of relief that I got into the aeroplane at the Tempelhof. I was emerging out of the shadow of the prison house. The uncertainty is so agonising. It is impossible for the Jews to know what each day will bring. The Reich laws are only temporary at present. As the months go by they will have to be renewed. They may be strengthened. There they sit, waiting in horrible silence—rather like the inhabitants of a Belgian village in August 1914. A few weeks ago I saw the *Burgomaster of Stilemonde*, Maeterlinck's play, with its picture of the little Belgian village, on a summer afternoon, waiting in agony and suspense for it knew not what—its happy simple world crashed about it, rumours reaching it every hour of burnings and executions, and nearer and nearer the tramp of the German hordes. My mind went back to the Jews of Germany I had left behind—the shadow that has suddenly come over their lives, the extinction of their hopes, and the haunting fear of the morrow. Their plight is not very different from the Belgians. The spirit that produced both these tragedies of human suffering—the elevation of the State into a monster crushing everything that is standing in its path—is precisely the same.

And the excuses for the violation of Belgium. They are exactly the same as are now being used for these outrages in

the Jewish community. Listen to the speech of Lieutenant Otto Hilmer, the German officer who has married the daughter of the Belgian burgomaster, and by the frightful accidents of war is now billeted on his father-in-law. "I admit," he says, "that the violation of Belgium was a regrettable incident ; in my opinion it was a mistake, necessary, perhaps, from certain points of view, but one which will cost us dear. But I do not admit the massacres. There have been executions of hostages and reprisals necessitated by incessant acts of treachery committed by the civil population. Here and there, perhaps, there has been some excess of zeal ; that unfortunately is inevitable. But I know the German Army better than you do, because I belong to it ; and it is the most highly disciplined Army in the world. It is extremely rare, not to say impossible, for the Army to act without orders, or to overstep the orders which it receives."

Change the scene and the character of the atrocities, and almost word for word they were the arguments used to me in justification of the horrors perpetrated on the Jews—so much so that I felt like crying out from my stall, "I have heard all this before."

It was true even to the lack of comprehension of the storm that they had created. I saw in Germany the same bewilderment at the reactions of Europe to the Jewish persecutions as there had been in the case of Belgium now nearly twenty years ago.



## CHAPTER XLV

### REVOLUTION WITHOUT A MARTYR

“ I THOUGHT ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult.” Thus wrote Burke, one hundred and fifty years ago, of the treatment of Marie Antoinette at the hands of the French revolutionaries. It is a reflection that occurred to me again and again as, one after another, the great bulwarks of liberty in Germany fell without a shot fired. Was there no single man, nor even body of men, with courage enough to stand up against the Nazi steam-roller ?

When I was in Germany in 1932 there was an institution known as the “ Iron Front.” It was the bodyguard of the Republic. It was the answer of the democrats to the Nazis—the determination, if necessary, to fight to the end, like the Swiss Guards before the Tuileries. There were great demonstrations up and down the country. “ Death rather than surrender ”—that was the splendid battle-cry that would ring out in unison. And now ? The Iron Front had disappeared from the vocabulary of Germany. The party was disbanded, the leaders were in hiding, the rank and file either silent or deserters to the enemy. All that remains of the great Social Democratic Party is a handful of exiles pathetically trying to influence opinion from the refuge city of Prague, safely across the frontier.

It can be argued plausibly that the fight was hopeless, that to resist was certain death, and that large masses of the working-classes were unemployed, hungry and cold and hopeless. None of these considerations, however, apply to the Nationalists. They were the old governing class, with all it should imply in sense of fair play and strength of character. When Herr Hitler came into power they had a majority of the Cabinet posts. The proportion was eight Nationalists to four Nazis. To-day they are in scarcely better plight than

the Socialists. Their party, which, after all, bore for many years the brunt of the opposition against the Republic, is disbanded ; their leader, Herr Hugenberg, is dismissed and disgraced. Not merely do his colleagues make no audible protest to Hitler, but they continue to serve under his leadership, only fearful lest it may be their turn for dismissal next.

No doubt they could justify their attitude. They would contend that they remain to try and prevent anything worse happening. After all, they do know how the machinery of Government works. As a witty Englishman said to me in Berlin when I asked whether Baron von Neurath, the Foreign Secretary, would be the next to go : " Von Neurath is the Battersea power station of this Government ; if he is dismissed, the lights go out." But that is their strength. If they had called Hitler's bluff, probably he would never have dared to resist them. Many of these tribulations have come on Germany simply and solely because none has dared to call the Reich Chancellor's bluff.

It is the same with the Jews. They have been shamefully let down by their leaders. Why did the bankers and commercial magnates make no protest to Hindenburg at the outrages that were being perpetrated against their community ? The answer is that they would never have been allowed to see him. Then why did they not stand on the doorstep of his palace until he did receive them ? Is it seriously suggested that a deputation headed by the Chief Rabbi, and containing the leaders of German Jewry, would have been arrested or shot down in the Wilhelmstrasse ? The idea is unthinkable. In any case, death would have been swallowed up in victory. The Nazis are far too sensitive to foreign criticism to stand the cataract of indignation that in such an event would burst upon them from every quarter of the globe.

I accuse the German Press, too, of unpardonable lack of courage. The editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt* is dismissed from his post by order of the Government. He submits without a murmur. Admittedly he is an old man. But so was C. P.

Scott. I should have liked to see the answer that he would have returned to a demand from an emissary of the Government that he should vacate the editorship of the *Manchester Guardian*. There is not a paper in all Germany that dares take the risk of a suggestion of hostile criticism of what Germany is doing.

This timidity infects every class of society in Germany. I tried to get introductions to the Rhineland industrialists. I was told that it was quite useless, as none of them "would dare to speak." Men in big positions, if asked what they thought of the Government, would look fearfully round and then take me into a corner and whisper their criticisms.

I have no doubt that there was a good reason for their caution. In Germany to-day walls have ears and streets have spies. It is quite a common occurrence for a maid waiting at table to report conversation to the local Nazi organisation and for a warning to be issued that the criticism of the Government must cease. Where one blames the German nation is for ever allowing such a situation to become possible.

They seem to be constitutionally endowed with the slave virtues. There was no real revolt in pre-war days against the Kaiser. Yet he would deliver such pronouncements as, "There is only one master in this country ; that I am. Who opposes me I shall crush to pieces." Now Herr Hitler has taken his place, and they abase themselves more deeply than ever.

This ingrained habit of unquestioning obedience pervades every phase of German life. I remember attending, before the Nazis came into power, a boxing-match one very hot night in Cologne. In the interval the audience poured out into the fresh air, only to find that, for some obscure reason, the officials had declared that the exit doors were not to be opened. There we stood sweltering in the vestibule, and not one man made a protest. In England we should have just pushed through the doors. But in Germany the rule had been made, and it was not for us to question it.

Yet in Germany it was not always so. There have been

men who have stood up to kings and emperors and the military machine itself. I like particularly the story of Bismarck, when insulted by the Emperor Wilhelm I, replying, "His Majesty must not speak to me thus in my wife's drawing-room." Even under the Kaiser the newspapers had flashes of independence. I came across a cutting the other day from a pre-war *Frankfurter Zeitung* in which the Emperor's policy is described bluntly as "incalculable, untrustworthy, and disturbing." Then there was that splendid act of heroism on the part of the German soldier who refused to be a member of the firing-party ordered to shoot Nurse Cavell, and in consequence was put up against a wall himself.

Where is that spirit in Germany to-day? The elections gave refreshing evidence that it was not wholly dead. They proved that there were three millions of Germans with courage to go to the polling-booths and vote against Hitler.

There are isolated incidents of great moral courage. I met one of them in Berlin. He was Dr. Kurt Hahn, the headmaster of Salem, that splendid attempt at a Liberal public school. When Hitler sent a telegram of congratulation to the reprieved Beuthen murderers, he forbade his boys to join the Nazi Party. When the Nazis came into power his number was up, and he was dismissed. Since then there has been the formation of the German Pastor's Emergency League and the brave protest against the attempt of Bishop Mueller, under the direction of Chancellor Hitler, to turn the Church Aryan.

One can only bow one's head before their courage, and wish that it had come sooner and had been more widely spread. For, apart from them, the rest is silence.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### IS IT PEACE, HITLER?

UNIFORMS EVERYWHERE, the continuous tramp of marching men, the shouting of patriotic songs, a general atmosphere in the streets of smartness and swagger—that was the dominant impression that I brought back from a tour of the New Germany. What did it all mean? Was Germany preparing to do battle for her lost frontiers?

I will try and set down the factors in the situation as carefully and unhysterically as I can. First of all, what is the potential strength of Germany? Of regular troops Germany possesses only the quota provided under the treaty. Small though they are, their discipline and efficiency are indisputable. I never thought that there could be any poetry in marching until I saw a detachment of the Reichswehr coming down the Tiergartenstrasse. It was laid down at Versailles that the terms of recruitment should be for twelve years. They have thus been put through a period of training more gruelling than in any other country, and are in consequence the finest standing army in the world. But there are only a hundred thousand of these. Alone, they could not stand up for a week against the troops of any of their neighbours.

But they do not stand alone. The alarming factors in the situation are the unofficial armies—the S.A. and the S.S. detachments of the Nazi movement. Ostensibly they were formed as an auxiliary police force to aid the State in its struggle against Communism. They called themselves National Socialists, but as the years have passed, their nationalism has strengthened at the expense of their Socialism. They regard themselves as the symbol of the regeneration of Germany after defeat and the thralldom of what they allege to have been a government of the Jews for the Jews. They care nothing for the Kaiser. They are the middle classes, and

they remember how little part they played in the pageants of the pre-war régime. Their god is the Reich, and Hitler is its prophet. Most of them are young men who have never seen a shot fired except in a street battle. Their pride in their brown shirts has something of the grandeur of fanaticism. They would bare their breasts to machine-guns if Hitler gave the order. Their strength is estimated at nearly three millions.

There are many who ridicule the potential fighting strength of these troops. Certainly the blockade and inflation have taken their toll. I remember seeing a parade of them at Nuremberg. A troop of boy scouts from an English slum city would have been more impressive in appearance.

They really enjoy military training. The ordinary German boy likes nothing better than giving orders or being ordered about. The meaningless manœuvres of a parade-ground, against which the English schoolboy frets and fumes in his public school O.T.C., are one long thrill to the German. They give him a sense of discipline and order and comradeship that nothing else can give. Above all, they are an excuse for wearing a uniform, and for that the German, in his leisure moments from shop counter or office desk, hungers as much as an Englishman does for flannel trousers and an open-necked shirt. So the week-end that in England is spent on the river or the tennis-court or the cinema or, where there is no pocket-money, mouching at the street corner, is in Germany dedicated to military training. Every open space on a Sunday afternoon, nowadays, is an open-air drill-hall.

Admittedly they have few weapons. The Nazi carries a bayonet, but he is not allowed a rifle. As far as I could estimate the situation, the provisions of the Versailles Treaty are being fairly faithfully observed. There is a certain clandestine manufacture of small arms, but the big-gun factories are silent. The working class are in a far too disgruntled mood for it to be safe to begin armament-making without the secret escaping to France. Of bombing aeroplanes there are none, and the speed with which the passenger aeroplane can be converted in time of need is much exaggerated.

It is more difficult to generalise about poison gas, but fortunately the chemists were Jews and persecution has turned them into vindictive exiles. The situation may be summed up thus : Germany has troops, but not, as yet, the wherewithal to make them effective.

But even that is not a position which can be viewed with complacency. It is not necessary to have rifles to begin training soldiers. A man who knows his drill is half-way through his soldiers' training. Germany has now already over a million half-trained men.

Admittedly there are powerful counter-influences. There are the working classes, or the large section of them that have not gone Nazi—silent, sullen, broken in spirit, it is true now, but not promising material for cannon-fodder. There are the older men who remember the Somme and the sliding duck-boards of the Passchendaele slaughter-house. "They are boys ; they do not know what war is," whispered one of them to me during a march past. "I try and tell my son, but it is no good ; he won't listen." There is a section of youth, liberal-minded in its widest sense, still outside the concentration camps, who loathe the new régime with the intensity of a Cavour or a Garibaldi. "They can shoot me here where I stand," said a young writer to me ; "I will not fight."

It is to these men that I look for salvation from catastrophe rather than to Hitler's Reichstag speech, however pacific in words. Hitler is a realist. His speech to the Tyrolese boys last year is a faithful reflection of his present attitude. He was faced with a vast audience of youth fed for many years on nationalist propaganda, thirsting for revenge ; for a fight, whatever the cost, to win back the lost territory. "How many are there of you ?" he asked. "Two hundred and fifty thousand. Fifty thousand are over sixty years of age, and therefore useless for war. Two hundred thousand—what can you do ? It would cost us a million men to fight a war. I know what war is. I know the stink of rotting corpses piled up behind the lines." That was the gist of Hitler's speech given me by one of his nearest friends who

was present at the time of its delivery. He was arguing that Hitler knew that war now would be fatal to himself and Germany. I do not doubt that. It would be just a race between the Poles and the French to see who reached Berlin first. It would mean overwhelming defeat and a Communist Revolution.

But a Germany re-armed is a very different proposition. I have no faith in the statement, made to me by every Nazi with whom I talked, that Germany will only fight in a defensive war. Any war can be represented as a defensive war. There is in Germany to-day the grossest exploitation of the persecution complex. Germany regards herself as surrounded by hungry enemies. There are horrific pictures in shop windows of the relative armaments of Germany in comparison with the rest of the world. Appeals are made to take classes in the elements of protection against gas attack. Gas-masks are sold in the shops side by side with soft hats. War propaganda is ceaseless and systematic. On the anniversary of Jutland, for instance, a special typewritten lesson was circulated to all elementary schools explaining how splendid and smashing was the German victory. The Rector of Frankfurt University told the students that it was more important to learn the mechanism of a gun than a chemistry text-book. Organised bodies of students are touring the Polish frontiers to have their nationalism inflamed by the stories of injustices. In addition, the Press is completely muzzled, so that any story, however fantastic, of foreign cupidity and cunning can be put across the German people.

With such a propaganda going on it is not unreasonable to suggest that Hitler talks peace, not because he really believes in it, but because for the next five or ten years there is no other course.

Hitlerism has come to stay—that was my second impression after a tour of the New Germany. It appeals to the ingrained desires of the German people for service and sacrifice and simplicity. It is not a political programme, but a religion. Hitler is not a politician, but a prophet.



I have already described the effect of his oratory. Except for a short period of imprisonment and occasional attempts at suppression, he has spoken uninterruptedly for ten years. He has trained himself, not merely for the platform, but for the microphone. In this way his appeal and his personality have reached the remotest village. It has been the favourite occupation in the country districts for years to pour into the market-place to hear Hitler over the radio. He had only that one speech, but they never got tired of it. It has brought him from the stupid humiliations of the Munich *Putsch* to the glories of the Wilhelmstrasse—and the journey has taken less than ten years.

But there is something more than mere oratory in all this. Hitler has the strength that comes with fanaticism. He is the man of the *idée fixe*. He believes with every fibre of his being that he can save Germany, and that nobody else can. His chief amusement is designing uniforms. He will spend happy hours over a new design for a swastika button. He has the mind and habits of the corporal that he was in the war.

He could talk without affectation "of the common men, of whom I am chief." His Brown Shirts worship him because he represents in himself all that they would most like to be.

As a faith there is much in Hitlerism to admire. Its works are by no means all iniquity. It has cleansed the towns. Streets that were a byword of ill repute have become as respectable as North Oxford on a Sunday afternoon.

It has given the unemployed, if not remunerative work, at any rate employment of some kind. I saw few loungers at the street corners. The workless are either in Nazi uniform, drilling as auxiliary troops, or they have been swept out into the great voluntary labour camps.

Above all, it has given an enthusiasm where before there was only despair. Germany is proud of itself again—or, rather, that part of Germany that is not living under the shadow of the concentration camp.

When German youth shouts at one another, "*Heil, Hitler!*" as it does from morn till midnight, it is not merely greeting a man, but the symbol of its own regeneration.

In addition to boundless faith, the Nazis have unlimited power. There is no alternative Government, because no alternative Government is allowed. Thaelmann, the Communist leader, is in prison. Breitscheid, the Arthur Henderson of the Socialists, has fled the country. Even Herr Bruening, the Chancellor of hardly more than a year ago, who is about as revolutionary as Sir Walter Layton, is condemned to live in a half-world, unable to hold any political meeting or make the mildest criticism as an Opposition leader.

It is significant that, in spite of all the horrors that have been perpetrated by the Nazi Government, there has not been one single protest from any body of public men.

In these days all generalisations as to the length of a Government are of necessity made subject to the economic situation. Many experts with whom I talked were of the opinion that some kind of inflation in the next twelve months could not be avoided.

That is the nightmare of the German people. A nation that endured the horrors of 1923 will make short work of a Government that plunges the country into them a second time.

But the only alternative is Communism. Democracy is extinguished for ten years, perhaps for half a century. The Nazi Government, created by force, can only be overturned by force.

Indeed, the whole organisation of the Nazis is really the Soviet system turned upside down. Hitler is another Stalin with a different direction, and he has to aid him in exactly the same way as in Russia—a secret police and an all-powerful party.

Communists in large numbers in the last few months have been concealing themselves in Nazi uniforms. That is the chief reason why the Nazi Party has now declined to enrol new members. It may be that at some future date Hitler will himself be faced with the very guns that he has himself created.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### RE-UNION IN LONDON

I RETURNED HOME in the middle of June to find London in the maelstrom of the Economic Conference. Whatever the Conference may have lacked in action, there was no deficiency in the amusements. There was a naval pageant at Greenwich, a garden-party at Windsor, almost a *fête-champêtre* at the Astors' place at Cliveden, in the valley of the Thames, a reception to the delegates in the House of Commons so grand that the Terrace looked like Lord's at the tea interval in the Eton and Harrow match. There was a succession of official banquets, and the fashionable young men and women had a choice of three or four dinner-parties and dances a night. It was almost the summer of 1914 over again. Houses that had presented shuttered windows for years came to life and took on for a few halcyon weeks something of their old life and colour. Hostesses who thought their last great dinner-party had been given on the morrow of Sarajevo made at least one effort to show what the season had once been like. Everybody tried to make an effort to do something they had not done for years, in honour of the distinguished visitors. It was Re-Union in London.

I watched in the background, fascinated by the contrast with the Berlin that I had just left. What nonsense is talked about the sweeping changes in English social life since the war ! Manners and modes may have changed ; the scale of entertaining has undoubtedly shrunk ; but the framework remains the same. A glittering Society still eddies round the Court. I attended the Royal Garden-Party. But for the changing fashions it might have been a newspaper illustration come to life of any Royal fête in the last fifty years. A few weeks before, I had shuffled, in the prescribed slippers reminiscent of a mosque, through the Kaiser's Palace at Potsdam in the wake of a guide telling me how much the marble

floors were worth, and from what window His Imperial Majesty used to watch the parades of the Prussian Guard. The same week I had met his grandson, Prince Louis Ferdinand, a pleasant young man in a dinner-jacket, interested primarily in Ford cars and being bear-led by an American who called him Louis at the end of each sentence.

Of social life as London means it there is none in Berlin. Edwardian hostesses tend to preside over their post-war entertainments in London with an air of patient resignation, like people making a brave show when evil days have come upon them. They do not know their good fortune. In Berlin, their counterparts are living in one room at the top of a block of working-class flats. Tears are shed every time a Park Lane mansion is marked down for demolition. But at least they are sold at a fabulous price for luxury hotels or palatial flats. The Duke of Westminster, in spite of predatory taxation, is probably richer to-day than he was before the war. The great houses in the Tiergarten, except where they have been converted into Embassies, are empty and crumbling. Admittedly some of the great country houses in England are converted into institutions or cannot find a purchaser of any kind. I noticed a mansion in the Cotswold, with forty-seven bed- and dressing-rooms and three thousand acres, advertised in *Country Life* recently at the knock-down price of £11,000. For all that, week-end entertaining continues on a scale unknown in any other country. At Bonn I motored down what was once called Millionaires' Avenue. There was not a single house occupied. Long since, the last gardener had been dismissed, grass grew in the drives, the gate-posts had rotted away, and all attempt at sale had been abandoned. In London it was impossible to get a table at the Savoy last summer, and the lunch-tables at the Ritz overflowed into the vestibule. Apart from the hotels, there was only one really smart restaurant open in all Berlin, and even at the Adlon it had been found necessary to close down one of the bedroom floors. Any motor-car in the street above twenty horse-power, with a chauffeur in livery, was a sight for comment. As I waited in London in traffic blocks that

stretched from one end of Regent Street to the other, and contained whole showrooms of Rolls-Royces and Hispano-Suizas, I could not resist the reflection that, so far as material wealth was concerned, there was never greater nonsense than to insist that it did not matter who won the war.

Yet, with it all, I think there was in London last year a strange feeling that these lavish entertainments in honour of the Economic Conference represented the Indian summer of a vanishing social epoch. The Edwardian hostesses came back into their own, but it was noticeable that they had very few competitors amongst their sons and daughters. There are no successors to the duchesses of the pre-war days. There has not merely been a change in money values, but in moral values. The young men and women who never knew the pre-war grandeurs do not hanker after them. They find the vast balls and the gargantuan dinner-parties boring. They are a little ashamed of a retinue of footmen. They prefer to dine in fours and eights, and be waited on by parlour-maids and "go on and dance afterwards." The omnibus week-end parties have lost some of their attractions. It may well be that the elder sons who now live in the dower-houses will never move into the mansions when their time comes to succeed. It is not that they are afraid of the social consequences of a display of wealth. On the whole, envy is not an English vice. The working classes, whether industrial or agricultural, rather like the appearance of riches. There is no greater mistake a member's wife can make than to visit her husband's constituency in her country clothes. I remember, at a Labour reception some years ago, talking to a mining member's wife when the lovely Lady Cynthia Mosley, the Labour member for Stoke, swept by in all the beauty of her pearl necklace and her exquisite Poiret gown. The miner's wife was entranced. "It is nice," she said, "to think that we have people like that in our movement, isn't it?" In the height of the coal lock-out in 1926 the Duke of Portland entertained a vast party at Welbeck, which included the then reigning King and Queen of Spain. On Sunday afternoon a drive was proposed, and a procession

of ten Rolls-Royces came out of Welbeck Abbey to make a grand tour of the mining villages. So far from the windows being broken, they were received everywhere with cheers.

There will be many regrets at the shutting up of mansions, but it will not be shared by their owners. In this they differ from all other aristocracies ; though more than a hundred years separates France from the Bourbons, the aristocracy still preserves itself apart, a narrow, exclusive, dull coterie of irreconcilables sighing for a past that can never return. It is the same in Austria. The group of aristocrats that still centres round the Jockey Club in Vienna, ostentatiously aloof from the politics of the modern world, exchanging stale gossip about family scandals, indulging in endless anecdotage of the gala nights of the empire, will not die out. It is being recruited by a youth that has not even the excuse that it knew the time for which it so hopelessly yearns. They look with blank incomprehension upon a revolution that in England is not a little of Society's own making.

Of course, as in all changes in England, there is a long period of transition. Taxation is to some extent hastening it, though its effects are exaggerated. Mounting super-tax is frequently met by rising land values. Landed proprietors with country estates within a radius of thirty miles of London are now able to sell off land, that perhaps had an agricultural value of twenty pounds an acre, at a thousand pounds an acre and more in a building boom created by the new facilities of transport. There is also the powerful influence of the Prince of Wales making for a generally simpler scale of living. Even to-day, Society almost unconsciously takes its code from the Court, and not merely London Society, but every grade of social life. It is significant of changing manners that the Prince of Wales refuses to live in Marlborough House, and so obviously hates ceremonial that when he comes to the throne the Court is bound to be shorn of much of its surviving splendour. It is not fear of the Socialists ; just the general *Zeitgeist* of the age.

That was why the splendours of that flaming June when London made merry for the great of the earth was so

entertaining. The new generation entered into it with a zest, because in some dim way they recognised that they were in at the end of a phase of social history. In twenty years' time this orgy of celebration for the Economic Conference may seem as remote as does to-day the dancing Congress of Vienna.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### ENGLAND ANSWERS HITLER

**T**HE GERMAN SHADOW brooded over politics as it had not done in a time of peace since the years that followed Agadir.

I was astonished at the extent to which it interested the electors. I spoke at a League of Nations Union meeting in Bristol. Usually an audience of thirty is regarded as satisfactory and fifty as a mass meeting. I went prepared for the usual excuses made by the distracted organisers when they see to their horror, in taking the speaker on to the platform, five women and two children and the caretaker. I wondered which explanation would be used. Was it too hot and the people wanted to be in the open air ; or was it so cold that they wanted to remain indoors ; or was it the week of the flower-show ; or was Greta Garbo at the cinema ; or was it the second Tuesday of the month, and of course nobody goes to meetings then ? A short but crowded experience of public speaking has taught me that potential audiences are a curiously sensitive, highly temperamental crowd with a bewildering variety of conflicting interests. On this occasion, to my astonishment, the meeting was packed out. Additional chairs had to be fetched, and even then the audience stood at the back and out in the road. I soon realised that it was not an interest in me but my subject that had attracted them. I had called my address, "Hitlerism in Action," and they really wanted to know what it portended.

It was a small indication of how untrue it is to say that the electors are indifferent to foreign politics. They are far from that. They may have little knowledge, but they are most anxious to learn. It is a supreme opportunity for the Government. Opinion on foreign affairs is fluid, but it is there ready to be moulded. Men and women would, I believe, respond to a lead, even though it meant taking risks and shouldering fresh responsibilities for peace ; but no lead comes.



There was the same strained interest in the foreign affairs debate in the House that July. Even obscure men had an audience in the dinner hour. That may not be a matter of surprise to those who have never seen the House of Commons in session. Electors have a flattering idea that their member, when, as he proudly tells them, he ventured to raise this question in the House of Commons last week, has done so in the presence of a crowded and enthralled chamber. "I told the Prime Minister," he continues, warming to his theme, "that the country would not tolerate such a policy"; and they imagine the Prime Minister squirming, and his colleagues flushed and angry, under this merciless castigation. They do not realise—may the deception long continue—that the Prime Minister probably had not been in the chamber all day; that the Government front bench was represented by a yawning Whip and an under-secretary waiting for his dinner; and that the green benches were a waste of scattered order papers whence all but the member himself and twenty other members, also pregnant with speeches, had fled. It is really a subject for comment when, as on this occasion, throughout the debate there was a continuous attendance after Ministers and ex-Ministers had delivered themselves.

Such was the depth of feeling on the danger that threatened, that, for the only time in this Parliament, the House was of one mind. Mr. Lansbury's peroration was both moving and deeply significant. "I am a Socialist, but, as I have said before, I love my country. We have done many big things in the history of mankind, we have done many bad things in the history of mankind, but I believe we are the only nation now, the one and only people, that can lead the world along democratic lines to peace and freedom; and in moving the reduction of the vote to-day I move it only in order that we may express our faith and our belief in that idea."

The speech produced an immediate response from Sir Austen Chamberlain. "The Right Hon. Gentleman," he answered, "said that he might differ from us, but that he

loved his country, and nobody will doubt that his country is very dear to his heart. But may I add that it is only this country which could have produced the Right Hon. Gentleman." It is true, and it is well that the ruling class in Germany should ponder it. I caught the same note of national solidarity when, some weeks later, I met the trade union delegation from Great Britain at the British Legation in Vienna. The talk centred on the foreign situation, and, though we were all of the most diverse mind and outlook and upbringing, we were all agreed that, where the vital interests of the Empire were threatened, there was a point beyond which pacifism could not go. Let the leaders of political thought in Germany beware lest once more they kick what they regard to be paper and find it rock.

The debate proved yet another triumph for Sir Austen Chamberlain. Up to his speech the Government were adamant on the question of police bombing. They would not forgo under any convention the right to use aeroplanes for police purposes in the outposts of the Empire. The aeroplane may be an invaluable weapon of protection against the incursion of tribes on the North-West Frontier of India—though even this view is challenged by some experts—but to me it is insanity, as I tried to point out in the debate, "to weigh the police considerations on the extremities of the Empire, with the safety of the Empire at its heart." London is the most vulnerable city in the world from the air, and it is surely worth almost any sacrifice to safeguard her against aerial bombardment. But this was not the view of the Government, and they seemed quite indifferent to the uneasiness of some of their supporters. Then Sir Austen, adjusting his monocle and laying aside his silk hat, advanced against the police bombers. It was a masterpiece of parliamentary dexterity. For, so far as the Government was concerned, it was not an attack but an appeal. He had only come to his conclusions "with an intense sense of responsibility, and with a deep sense of the sacrifice we are making . . . but I say to the Government, can you allow a disarmament conference to break down on this system ?

The answer is inevitable. . . . I am not going to vote against the Government this afternoon. I appeal to argument in the hope that I may persuade them, and if they are not immediately persuaded to-night—do not expect an announcement of the reversal of their policy in the course of this debate—perhaps they will think the matter over again and be drawn to the same conclusion as I have been. That is all I want to say.” But it was enough. The moment he sat down the under-secretary was on his feet giving explicit assurances that the reservation would not any further be insisted upon.

It was an object lesson on how to make a Government climb down with the minimum loss of dignity. It was also, incidentally, a refreshing indication that argument still had its weight, and that the Government, for all its strength, could not face a formidable revolt against its policy. Debate had scored a victory over the big battalions.

It was a victory that was badly needed, for it was at this time that the anti-democratic forces received a new recruit from an unexpected quarter. Sir Stafford Cripps, the leader of militant Socialism, made the first of his speeches with which the country is now familiar. It was in favour of the assumption by a Labour Government of emergency powers by means of an enabling Bill, to be passed by the Labour members after the election, transferring all their main powers over to the executive. It was precisely what I had seen the members of the Reichstag do four weeks before. This was the new Hitlerism, an instrument, not to prevent a revolution of the Left, but in order to promote it.

Sir Stafford Cripps is such a formidable figure in our public life to-day that it is worth trying to understand what sort of man he is. His rise in politics has been rapid. Prior to the summer of 1931 he was unknown outside the body of Socialist intellectuals. Then Mr. Ramsay MacDonald appointed him Solicitor-General. He held, without difficulty, the Gibraltar of East Bristol in the necessary by-election to enable him to enter the House, and, when the National Government was formed, remained with the Labour Party, and was the one ex-Minister who put up, in that short period

of Opposition before the election, any show of a fight. A narrow victory in October 1931 left him on the front Opposition bench—so far as debating talent went, top of the class. Since then he has constituted himself the most dangerous enemy that the present organisation of society has to face.

The question naturally arises, Is he sincere? Men point to his aristocratic connections; to his country house; to his immense practice at the Bar. They insist that no man in that position can honestly desire to strip himself of it. I believe that that is precisely what he is prepared to do. He may earn the vast income that is credited to him in his legal practice, but he spends the greater part of it in political propaganda. He has immense ability; he pours it out almost recklessly in the service of the causes in which he believes. There is no man more tireless in his attendance at the House. He is not merely in the precincts, but in the Chamber itself. Many a time have I stumbled through a speech the more easily because I have seen Cripps on the Opposition bench with every appearance of listening to what I had to say—a rare practice on front benches. He will lead the forlorn remnant of the Opposition right through an all-night sitting, grandly indifferent to the fact that he may have to be in wig and gown when the courts begin their sitting the same morning.

He makes no compromise with society. He is not like Sir Oswald Mosley, one day the stern puritan, the fighting expression of the Fascist desire for discipline and restraint, and the next a prominent figure in the great functions of London Society. He has no friends apart from Socialists, and his favourite recreation is knitting. Even in Bristol he does not unbend to opponents. I have only once met him at a non-party function, and that was under the auspices of the League of Nations Union. No dinners nor garden-fêtes, nor flower-shows, for him. He does not allow himself to be interviewed by deputations. He stands by the Labour programme, and there is nothing more to be said. His arguments on the platform may be violent, but they are always on a high level. He will not give the easy answer that

may win non-Socialists support. The capitalist system must be overthrown. Nothing is of any importance beside that.

He has courage of a high order. There is no man in the House who can stand up better to barracking. It is a fine sight to see him winding up a debate for Labour late at night in a noisy House. One of Mr. MacDonald's defects as a Labour leader was that he was so easily upset by an insolent interruption by some young Tory back-bencher. Cripps is quite unmoved by any clamour of that kind. He waits until it has died down, and then quietly proceeds with his speech. Only once has he run away, and that was from the unfortunate Buckingham Palace speech, and then only at the frantic dictates of the party organisers, who realised the electoral consequences of any flirtation with republicanism. For the rest, he is the sea-green incorruptible. In defeat he is uncompromising, and in victory he will be ruthless. It is not easy to like such a man, but it is difficult to withhold admiration, particularly when the causes that he serves are never likely to be brought to fruition. Cripps has the qualities by which revolutions are made, and it is because in England the mass of men and women do not like those qualities that revolutions in England are not made.

All the same, those speeches and articles seemed to bring Hitler right into domestic politics. It was not so much that Sir Stafford was advocating a dictatorship on the German lines as that he was creating the conditions when it would be advocated, and advocated successfully. He was sponsoring just that irresponsible and revolutionary Socialism which when it gets into power produces the Fascist re-action.

## CHAPTER XLIX

### DR. DOLLFUSS AT BAY

**I**N AUGUST 1933 the interest shifted to Austria. The pressure of Germany on the Austrian Government became more acute. There was the first real danger that the Nazis would succeed in hammering down the resistance of Dollfuss and Austria would be incorporated in the Nazi Reich. In June a thousand-marks tax was placed on German tourists into Austria. It was a crippling blow, for, since the disembodiment of the Austrian Empire, Austria had become another Switzerland so far as the tourist traffic was concerned. It was followed up by a barrage of hostile propaganda. Inflammatory leaflets were dropped from aeroplanes ; they were floated down the Danube in bottles ; they were smuggled across in hay-carts ; all the resources of the wireless were mobilised and two or three times a week the Austrian people were exhorted by Herr Habicht, the so-called "Nazi Inspector for Austria"—an Austrian refugee in the pay of the Nazi Government—to rise against their oppressors.

In his extremity Chancellor Dollfuss made an appeal to the Powers. It was one to which they would not fail to respond. France and England had indeed stated, in the plainest terms possible, that they would not tolerate the crushing out of Austrian independence. Sir John Simon had said in the debate in the House of Commons on July 5th : " I say without any hesitation that the whole sympathies of this country are with Austria in her efforts to preserve her independent position. It is most fortunate that the Four Power Pact should be negotiated and initialled, because it does give an opportunity, which I hope will be used, to assist that country, and Dr. Dollfuss, to maintain her undoubted rights in the face of very grave circumstances." It was followed up in France by a speech by M. Daladier :

"We are determined," he said, "to guarantee the independence of Austria. Small Powers have the same right to a free life as stronger Powers."

But words were clearly not enough. Money was not enough. The Austrian loan in London had been over-subscribed. The propaganda only increased in intensity. A *démarche* to Germany was decided upon. Italy was approached, but assumed the greatest reluctance to join in. Signor Mussolini thought that he could do more with Chancellor Hitler by peaceful persuasion. He therefore asked to be excused. From that moment the *démarche* was doomed to failure. The collective front that alone could bring Germany to reason had broken at the start. The remonstrance was made, and Germany returned a defiant answer.

Was it just bluff? Would she in fact cease her broadcast attacks? Was the Dollfuss Government already tottering? What was the strength of the Austrian Nazi movement? Might not their triumph bring Europe to the edge of the abyss? These were the questions that I was sent out by my paper to investigate in the second week in August. Events were moving so fast that I decided to make the journey by air, and, leaving Croydon at 7 p.m., I was in Vienna in twelve hours. The journey from Prague was made in one of those cataclysms that, whenever they occur, are invariably called "the worst thunderstorm for fifty years." The lightning flashed and the little aeroplane rocked and shook in the convulsions of the thunder and rain. It was horribly frightening, and, in the combustible condition of Europe, symbolic of the wrath to come if mankind committed its second act, within a generation, of supreme folly.

The situation that had seemed disquieting in England appeared positively alarming in Vienna. There was little substance for the belief, cherished in diplomatic circles, that the German Government in the Austrian situation, while anxious to appear defiant in the eyes of its nationals, would in fact give no further cause of offence to the Powers. The day after my arrival the broadcast attacks began all over again. It was a penal offence in Vienna to "tune in" to

Munich, and I had to get special permission. This time it was Herr Knaus, the chief of the Nazis in Styria. He applied the adjective "traitorous" to the Austrian Government, and said that "against the desires of the Austrian people Austria had, in 1918, been condemned to an impossible independence." This was the third radio attack on Austria from Munich since the Hitler Government assured Mussolini that their attacks would cease.

I heard for the first time of the presence of the Austrian Legion. The German Government had organised a substantial force of Austrians on the German side of the frontier. Any fugitive from Austrian justice is sure of a welcome in Germany. This welcome takes the form, not merely of food and clothing, but often of a job as well.

The German Government is known to have considered the plan of sending these men over the Austrian frontier in small detachments, and, since they would be Austrian, it would be difficult for the Austrian Government to deal with them as invaders.

Once safely over the frontier, they could join up with the Nazi agents in Austria and together they could march on Vienna and bring down the Dollfuss Government.

A day or two later, astonishing evidence was provided of the extent of the Nazi plot to overthrow the Dollfuss Government. The Nazi organisation had been proscribed. A chance raid on a Nazi "cell" disclosed a direct connection between the illegal organisation and the officials of the Nazi Government in Germany. The incident illustrates so effectively the lengths to which the German Government are prepared to go in hammering their way through to the goal of a pan-Germany that it is worth examining further the meaning of these revelations.

When the Austrian Nazi Party was prohibited in June, it created an illegal organisation to continue its forbidden activities. This organisation was hidden under the name of the Society for Cultural Co-operation in Eastern and Southern Europe. At the head was a Dr. Herbert Schneider, a dental surgeon. This organisation worked in the closest



co-operation with the Nazi Department of Foreign Affairs in Berlin, which is directly responsible to Chancellor Hitler. A brother of Dr. Schneider was working in this Berlin office. But the most remarkable disclosure was a letter from a Nazi to the Albanian Consul in Frankfurt-on-Main, giving instructions that all correspondence with reference to Nazi activities in Austria should be sent to the German Minister in Vienna, "care of the Legation Secretary, Droich Opport, who will transmit it to the prohibited Nazi organisation in Vienna."

It was evident from this that the German Legation had been abusing its diplomatic privileges to further treasonable activity against the Austrian Government, to which it is accredited.

One of these privileges is, of course, the use of "the diplomatic bag," by which Foreign Offices communicate with their representatives in foreign capitals. This bag is not opened at the Customs and is made completely immune from interference of any kind.

It was as though the British Embassy in Berlin had secretly agreed to make itself the channel of intrigue between the opponents of Hitlerism in England and those who are trying to overthrow it in Germany. Other documents revealed the organised services of couriers and spies and the formation of bands of Austrian immigrants on the frontier. There was also evidence that the embargo on German travellers was first used as a threat to certain Austrian farmers and industrialists to induce them to join the Nazi movement. Bribes were offered in the shape of commercial advantages arising from a union of Austria and Germany.

As a counter-blast to the broadcast by Herr Hitler's "Inspector of Austria," in which he described the Austrian Government as "a band of terrorists and traitors," these disclosures could not have been bettered. But nothing could have more effectively exposed the weakness of the anti-Nazi forces. The only effective answer by Austria would have been a complete rupture of diplomatic relations. This the Dollfuss Government dare not do. It is impossible to

blame them. France and England had made their protest and had tamely accepted a rebuff. What chance had Austria, a nation of six millions, against the bully and bluster of a Government of sixty millions ? Then there were the Austrian Nazis. What was the strength of the enemy within the gate ?

## CHAPTER L

### AUSTRIA LOOKS FOR HER SOUL

AUSTRIA is a most difficult country for a journalist to visit, for it is supremely uninterested in itself. In the average country the arrival of an English journalist is discovered as quickly as a dog smells out a cat in a back garden. In a few days every propagandist, political and social, is after him.

Vienna, indeed, has always been the headquarters of the exiled nationalist. There is no plot in Balkan history that has not had its first ramifications in Viennese cafés. The moment it was known that a member of Parliament and a Fleet Street journalist and a Liberal—a heaven-sent combination for the man with a nationalist grievance—was installed in the Meissl Schadn hotel, then the whole pack was after me. First it was the son-in-law of the Raditch who had been murdered in the Parliament at Belgrade. He came with armfuls of propaganda about the plight of the Croat under the heel of the Jugo-Slav Government. He was followed by a Slovak, a sinister-looking clerical gentleman with a beard, who spread out maps and papers and was so carried away by his own eloquence that he frequently addressed me as "Gentlemen." He and his friends, too, like the Croat, were groaning under an intolerable tyranny, this time at the hands of the Czechs. I refrained from telling him that they had put forward just the same stories of wrong and oppression when they were under the Austro-Hungarians, and that really they must be very tiresome people. I saw the Croat down one lift and up the other came a fierce-looking Greek. In a few minutes my withers were being wrung by the stories of Italian barbarities in the Dodecanese. "Surely the British Parliament, that had never been deaf to the cry of the oppressed . . . Gladstone . . . Bright . . . the home of liberty." His eloquence swept on. It was like a meeting of the Eighty Club. I could not help wondering what sort of audience I

should get in the House of Commons, remembering their indifference to China in the maw of Japan, for the wrongs of the Greek population in Italian islands. So it went on all through my time in Vienna. My mind became an unhappy whirl of plebiscites, and minority representation, and censored newspapers, and State trials, and arbitrary imprisonments, and all the melancholy mumbo-jumbo of the persecuted.

The only people who never came to see me were the Austrians. They had no interest in propaganda, and exhibited no inclination to learn what a London journalist or a member of Parliament or a Liberal thought about them. Vienna, indeed, was a great surprise to me. I had expected to find a city in a tumult of anxiety—groups of excited citizens discussing the latest news from the frontier, angry demonstrations outside the German Embassy, uniforms everywhere, full-throated cheers for Dollfuss whenever he appeared.

I had been in Berlin in the early days of the Nazi Revolution, when it was Hitler against the world, and I realised how well Germans stage themselves. Here was Dr. Dollfuss at bay—the little Chancellor, only four foot eleven in height, standing up against the blustering might of Berlin—and I expected the same atmosphere of the theatre.

There was none of it. A Cabinet meeting that lasted eleven hours, and was known to be considering a complete rupture with Germany, did not bring half a dozen people into the Ball Haus Platz. I had not seen a single member of the Heimwehr, the defence force organised against the Nazi menace, in the streets of Vienna. Those who could afford it were in the mountains ; those who could not were in the vast swimming-baths along the Danube ; and those who could afford neither were sitting on the shaded benches down the centre of the Ringstrasse, hungry but silent.

It was almost as difficult to find a picture-postcard of Chancellor Dollfuss as it would be of Mr. Runciman in England. It is this apparent apathy that is the greatest obstacle to Hitler's success. The Austrian speaks German, but

that is about the only link he has with the German mentality.

Austria is not a militarist nation. It never was, even before the war. One sees that in the few picture-postcards that remain of the pre-war days. In Germany they emphasise the grandeur of the military pageant; in Austria, such as survive make jokes about it.

The Austrian has no love for uniforms and he does not take readily to discipline. When the young Austrian climbs a mountain, he does it because he likes it, not because he worships physical fitness or exalts endurance into a religious creed. The Jews are probably only a little less powerful in Vienna than they were in Berlin, but there is little hatred of them as such. The most successful remark in a musical show in Vienna was to the effect that the Nazis were so anxious to search into one's parentage for Jewish ancestry that the only safe thing to be in Germany was a foundling. It will be many years before such a joke produces laughter in Berlin.

The Austrians are kindly, tolerant, slovenly, charming, humorous, and unambitious—just the qualities, in fact, that no good Nazi can afford to possess.

The ordinary Austrian working man knows what Hitlerism means, and, though he is not vociferous in his patriotism, he is not going to have it if he can help it.

That was the meaning of the extraordinary silence of Vienna under the Dollfuss dictatorship. Vienna is perhaps the most Socialist city in Europe outside Soviet Russia. Ever since the war it has been ruled by a Socialist municipality. Yet last August it was quite clear that the Socialists, rather than risk a Nazi invasion, were ready to stomach a temporary dose of despotism.

The strength of the Austrian Nazis comes, as it did in Germany, from the middle classes. The young men, their parents' savings swallowed up in the inflation, cannot get jobs. One of the main reasons is the shrinkage in the size of the country. It is as if Great Britain were not merely shorn of its Empire, but great chunks of Scotland and Wales and northern England had been hacked away from it. What chance then would there be for the sort of young man who

to-day is a district officer in Nigeria, or is on a tea plantation in Bihar, or even a Whitehall Civil Servant? The opportunities in Austria for employment, once so boundless in the Imperial Army or the far-flung provinces of the empire, is now cribbed and confined to an area not much bigger, and certainly less rich, than Portugal. From time to time I would meet groups of Austrian students. When they thought it was safe they would tell me that they were all Nazis.

Is it surprising that youth sees no salvation except in union with Germany? It is very difficult indeed to put up a case against it on paper. Though I talked with Dollfuss and several of his Ministers, I never heard any good economic argument against it. There is just the instinct that it would be disastrous, and the instinct is right. Vienna would be condemned to an iron regimentation wholly at variance with her outlook and development, and there is not the slightest doubt—apart from the general effect in Europe of the triumph once again of the principle that Might is Right—that Austria's own economic interests, like those of Bavaria have been, would be sacrificed to Prussian interests. For instance, what about timber? It is Austria's staple product. Is Germany likely to put an embargo on Russian timber in order to secure a stable market for Austria?

Hunger is the Nazi recruiting-sergeant. So is boredom. For the average man in his early thirties who can still remember the splendours of the Imperial Court, Government nowadays is a drab business. There is no call to service or thrill of adventure. Its absence does not make such a gap in the life of an Austrian as it does in a German boy, but the need is there all the same.

It is these two wants that Dollfuss has set himself to satisfy. Loans, preferences, embargoes, economic federations, trade agreements—every device has been examined and negotiated with the determination to show that economic salvation can be won other than by union with Germany.

The feeling that Austria is worth even fighting for to the death is naturally a plant of slow growth. It was Vienna as the centre of the Hapsburg Empire, not as the capital of

Austria, that inspired loyalty and reverence before the war. Then came 1918, and its complete dismemberment. Vienna, that was the political, commercial, and cultural centre of an empire of fifty-two millions, was left the unwieldy head of a State of six millions.

Its former territory was split among four new States, each of which contains more inhabitants than the Austria from which they were severed.

Vienna remained a mournful monument of past glories. Even for a foreigner it is impossible not to moralise about the passing of earthly greatness in modern Vienna—this vast Imperial city without an empire. The mighty palaces of the Hofburg and the Schönbrunn stand empty and decaying ; the War Office, that once cast its shadow over all Europe, now houses the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Agriculture, and a new Ministry of National Defence. The Ball Haus, whose lightest word used once to echo in every chancellery in Europe, now speaks for a country about the size of England without Yorkshire. Embassies have become legations, and, though admirals look down from pinnacles, there is no fleet left to command. . . .

*And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death.*

With such a heritage of humiliation it was no wonder that it was difficult to inspire in the new generation a feeling for a country which, under the surgery of Versailles, was little more than a geographical expression.

But a gallant effort was made. The Fatherland Front was formed. Every hoarding in Vienna that month was placarded with a photograph of Dollfuss, with the inscription underneath : " Our Chancellor, who loves Austria and will protect it." Then followed an appeal to join the Fatherland Front, with a clever picture of those who were joining it—medical students, business men, commercial magnates, shopkeepers. The favourite game of the Nazi boys was to deface them by shying eggshells filled with tar.

The Heimwehr was organised under Prince Stahremberg

as the auxiliary defence force against the Nazi régime. It was clothed in the uniform—green, with red facings—of the old Imperial Rifle Corps. Every attempt was made to recruit Austrian patriotism. When full account is taken of the difficulties, a substantial measure of success was attained.

In 1918 the whole country was for joining up with Germany. The Provisional National Assembly declared that Austria was "a constituent part of the German Republic." Two years later all the parties had put a union with Germany in their programmes. In a plebiscite in Salzburg in 1921 a hundred thousand votes were cast for union with Germany, and only nine hundred against. In 1926, Chancellor Siepl said that ninety per cent of the Austrian voters favoured the customs union. As short a time ago as 1929, one of the Socialist leaders said no politician would dare come out against it. And last August?

For all the Austrian Nazis' bluster and, what is more, the German money behind them, they hardly represent a third of the nation. The rest are for independence. That is the miracle that Dollfuss wrought.

The Austrians are a deeply sentimental people. It would be a surprise if it were not so in a nation that gave a home to Mozart, and fathered the Vienna waltzes. To-day it takes the form of an adoration of Franz Josef. There has been no such scene of enthusiasm since the war as there was when *White Horse Inn* was produced in Vienna and the old Emperor appeared before them. The band broke into the Imperial anthem, and the whole audience was on its feet in delighted cheering. Since then there has been a spate of plays about the Hapsburgs. At one time there were five playing in Vienna at the same time.

It was not that the dreams of empire had come back. It was simply that Austria was finding her soul again. It is significant that the old Imperial anthem has been restored, except that Austria and not the empire is now the theme.

Austria was rediscovering pride in her past, and because of that was developing—or at any rate that part of her that supported Dollfuss—faith in her future.



## CHAPTER LI

### DIPLOMACY IN A ROWING-BOAT

AS THE DAYS passed it was clear that there would be no cessation of the attacks over the ether, which had been the real inspiration of the *démarche*. Everybody had been waiting for August 18th, which was the day when the Munich broadcasting programmes, issued fortnightly, would be announced. It had been argued up to then that Germany would merely maintain her attitude of defiance until the conclusion of the programme already arranged before Britain and France made their protests, and that thereafter the German Government would ensure that these attacks did not occur again. But, when the new programmes appeared, "Talks on Austria" were announced for the following day, and for Monday, Tuesday, and Friday in the following week.

Then came, the next day, a tirade against Austria as violent as any that had yet taken place from the Munich broadcasting station. Herr Habicht explicitly announced the continuance of the Nazi attacks on Austria's independence—"If the question is brought before the League of Nations, the Nazis will be very glad. The truth will be revealed that a majority is being suppressed.

"The Austrian Government wants to stabilise its reign of force. It is quite natural, if the Nazis cannot express themselves, that they should go in for illegal activities. The secrets revealed by the *Reichpost* [the Austrian Government organ] are no secrets. We openly announce that the fight is going on until the Nazi victory is assured."

There was also increasing evidence of the formidable character of the Austrian Legion over the border.

What could Chancellor Dollfuss do? All day long the Cabinet sat investigating every possibility. They could make another protest to Berlin. But that was obviously futile.

not one single protest in the last six weeks had the German Government even vouchsafed the courtesy of a reply. The Government could break off diplomatic relations. There was a strong movement in favour of it, but, while they were still deliberating it, a communication was received from the Italian Minister vehemently opposing such a drastic course. It was obvious that they would not have the backing of Mussolini. They could leave it to France and England to act. After all, it was now clear that their *démarche* had failed, and it was for them to face up to the consequences. But the British Cabinet had separated to the grouse moors, and the French Cabinet never knew from day to day whether it would be the Cabinet to-morrow.

In any case, what, in actual fact, was Great Britain prepared to do? Convert her protests into threats? There comes a time when threats may have to be converted into action. The bluff is called, and troops have to be sent. It is war. Would the House of Commons sanction the despatch of so much as a non-commissioned officer to Kufstein? It is no good a Government playing the part of Palmerston at the Foreign Office if it has to face a pacifist House of Commons.

Austria might appeal to the League. Such a course would only strengthen the Nazi forces in Austria. They would be able to point the finger of scorn at a Chancellor, himself unable to govern, who had to call in the moral aid of Chile and Peru. It has never been sufficiently understood how strong was the hostile minority in Austria. The adaptation by *Punch* to Austria of its famous cartoon, in the first weeks of the war, depicting Belgium as the farm-boy standing in front of the Prussian farmer, with his back to a gate marked "No Thoroughfare," was effective but misleading. In Belgium there was no pro-German party, or only when the country was overrun, and, to a few, surrender seemed the wisest course. In Austria a third of the nation was on the side of Germany.

It was a cruel dilemma for Dollfuss, and he acted with great prudence and common sense. He decided to seek a personal interview with Mussolini and lay the whole position

before him. An aeroplane was chartered, and he set off for Rimini.

I had my first meeting with Chancellor Dollfuss at the Ball Haus just before he started. His smallness of stature is not exaggerated. He is tiny. I could hardly see him above his gigantic desk. There he was in this huge gold-and-green room, where once Metternich wove his tangled webs, and next door to the hall that once had been the setting of the Congress of Vienna. It all seemed to epitomise the bewildering changes in national fortunes—this little man now calling in the aid of a State that his predecessors had bludgeoned and bullied into submission.

I could not but admire his gaiety and his courage. He made jokes about his stature. "Yes, I am the smallest and youngest Chancellor in Europe." I told him the story, current in England at the time of his visit, that Mr. MacDonald, on seeing him for the first time, had remarked, "I am so glad to see you, but I am sorry your father could not have come." He was delighted. There is nothing, I discovered afterwards, that he enjoys more than hearing of the interest that is taken in him in England, and the affection that he has left behind him.

I could understand, too, how he inspired courage in his Cabinet. As we talked, I could see that he had that gift of Mr. Lloyd George, during the war, of never being downcast however depressing the news. Though he must have had a gruelling week, he was bounding over with good spirits. If ever he falls, there will be none of the melodramatic stiff upper lip about him. It will be with a gay smile.

I see him to his car, and then go off to Salzburg, whither he is bound on his return from Rimini. As the train climbs into the mountains from Vienna, I sit back and try and get a mountain view of European politics.

The day before, I had visited a tiny hamlet thirty miles from Vienna. On the war memorial there were no fewer than forty-six names. Sculptured in stone stood a soldier in an attitude of deepest mourning. He seemed to be the symbol of the sorrow of the world for the catastrophe of 1914.

Yet has the world really learnt its lesson? Vienna is once more in turmoil. This time it is not the proud empire demanding the abject submission of the Balkan States, but the small country boldly answering, as Belgium did nineteen years ago, "No thoroughfare," to the bullying of Berlin. Every day there comes disturbing news from the frontier—the exchange of random shots between frontier guards; an aeroplane dropping seditious leaflets; an unexplained murder; a provocative speech. It is the atmosphere of 1914 over again.

Germany is in the grip of the same psychology. She is suffering from claustrophobia. She finds that she is hemmed in. At all costs she must have air. Where can she break this iron chain? She attacks in the weakest link. She thinks that she can keep France quiet by renouncing any claim to Alsace-Lorraine; England is pacifist; Poland is more difficult, but a policy of temporary conciliation there will do the trick, so she cools down the Nazi ardours at Danzig. Everything is concentrated on the drive to Vienna. But it must be swift and sudden and relentless. That done, she can outflank the Czechs; Hungary will be at her mercy. The dreams of pan-Germanism will be half accomplished. The *Drang nach Osten* will have begun in earnest.

Only Italy stands in the way. What is Mussolini saying to Dollfuss? He is playing a very deep game. He wants an understanding with Germany. Together they can pull a long nose at France. But may not Germany grow too formidable? After all, there are two hundred thousand German-speaking people in the Italian Tyrol. Italy does not want a militant Germany on the Brenner Pass. Mussolini has to make up his mind whether he will support Austrian independence to the limits of a breach with Germany. He cannot twist and turn any longer. What is his decision?

Whatever it is, the future is very dark. Can Mussolini really support Dollfuss with Italian bayonets? The Austrian peasants have their memories too—of how the Italians ran at Caporetto, and how they desecrated the graves in the Tyrol that they seized. Whatever happens the shadow of war

seems to be lengthening. Yet nobody wants war. Look at these boys and girls who crowd every wayside station in their charming peasant clothes. They do not want war. They only want to be left to eat and drink and sleep, and marry and be given in marriage. Is mankind really in the grip of something that it cannot control, that forces its feeble fumbling fingers to grip the mighty weapons of science to no better purpose than its own destruction? So I muse until the darkness comes, and with it, for we are now in the mountains, drenching rain, and I arrive in Salzburg in the last stages of loneliness and depression.

I found Salzburg enjoying an unexpectedly good season. The British Government might be timid and hesitant in their support of Austria, but the British middle classes had clearly made up their minds that, if spending money in Austria was any help, they would do their best. Every hotel was crammed, and I was assured that the influx had made up, at any rate during August, for the absence of the German tourists. For all that, I found Salzburg extraordinarily depressing that Sunday. It never ceased raining, the mountains were enveloped in clouds, and I have not even an untutored appreciation of music.

By dint of a series of expensive long-distance telephone-calls, I spent the evening piecing together what had been happening in the sunshine at Rimini. It seemed to have been the oddest of meetings.

Dressed in a bathing-suit, Signor Mussolini sat in a skiff with Dr. Dollfuss, the Austrian Chancellor, and discussed the problem of restoring peace between Austria and Germany.

This strange conference occurred when Dr. Dollfuss hired the rowing-boat, and pulled it out to where Signor Mussolini was swimming. The Italian Premier climbed into it, and, with Dr. Dollfuss rowing, they steered seawards for half an hour's undisturbed talk. When they returned to the shore, they were loudly cheered by people on the beach.

Of what had taken place between them, nothing was known beyond intelligent guess-work. For that I had to

wait until Dollfuss arrived the next day. I had the greatest difficulty in finding him, but finally ran him to ground in a retiring-room at the Festival Theatre, between the first and second acts of *Faust*. He was in tearing spirits.

He had apparently got all that he wanted. Fresh representations were to be made by Italy with regard to the radio onslaughts from Munich. Hitler would be told that he was violating, not the dictated Peace of Versailles, but the Four-Power Pact, to which Hitler himself had put his signature. Further joint action of the Powers would be taken if Italy's fresh representations failed. With his eyes dancing with pleasure, Dr. Dollfuss said to me, "My visit to Mussolini has been most satisfactory. Italy is determined to maintain the independence of Austria." He told me of the extraordinary background on which these *pourparlers* had been conducted. "Yes, we rowed together. Mussolini took the helm. Then we went for a long motor drive. We talked as we drove."

I wondered if the holiday surroundings had not led Dollfuss to think that he had got more than he had. But it was not so. A few days later the Italian Fourth Army Corps was moved from Verona to Bozen, within a score of miles of the Austrian frontier, and the danger of Nazi invasion died away. The jaunt on the Adriatic for the time being at any rate had saved the peace of Europe.

## CHAPTER LII

### ALONG THE PERILOUS FRONTIER

THE NEXT TWO DAYS I spent on the Austro-German frontier, and realised how much Austria must depend for her independence on her foreign friends. With the Governor of Salzburg I motored along the boundary between Bavaria and the province of Salzburg that had been one of the danger-points. It is wild moorland, rather like the border country round Carlisle. There is not a gun or a fort to be seen. The only natural protection is the River Salzach. My guide was delighted to see that it had been swollen by the recent rains. It meant that it was more difficult for the recruits to the Austrian Legion to ford it. We visited Ollendorf, where there is a bridge one side of which is in Austria and the other in Bavaria. It was a grim illustration of the severed relations between them that I did not see so much as a hay-cart cross from one side to the other. There was this little town, designed by nature to live together in amity, talking the same language, having the same economic interest in the tourist traffic, and yet by this fantastic nationalism cut in half, the one as apart from the other as if they were both in different hemispheres. No German could cross that bridge unless he paid a fine of a thousand marks.

Yet this frontier is no gaping wound, the result of an unsuccessful war. Its lines were drawn as long ago as 1815. It has not been altered since. I talked to a group of peasants. "We only want to be left alone," they said. "We are not a people of war." They certainly are not. The utmost efforts are being made to commit no provocative act. The Heimwehr—the defence force—are not allowed up to the frontier. They are kept at Salzburg, for use only in urgent need. The Austrian Government has not even replied to the German embargo on tourist traffic. It costs the equivalent of about seventy pounds for a German to

visit Austria. An Austrian can cross to Germany for his holidays for less than five shillings.

Feeling rather like a spy, I crossed over the German border to see if I could see anything of the Austrian Legion. They were housed at Lechfeld. It looked just like an ordinary concentration camp. Here the refugees were fed and clothed and drilled. A German official explained it all to me. What was the German Government to do? These poor men had sought sanctuary in Germany. They did not want them, but, since they were there, they could not let them wander over the country homeless and starving. So they put them to work in a concentration camp. Ideas of invasion were all moonshine. I heard stories, that I could well believe, that many of these Austrian Nazis found the stern discipline of German non-commissioned officers extremely irksome, and, in addition to the flow of recruits into Germany there was a counter-flow of the disillusioned back into Austria.

The next day I journeyed along the frontier on my way home. The moors and the rolling wooded hillsides gave way to towering mountains. Only mountaineers could have penetrated that boundary. One mounted guard with a rifle was considered sufficient to protect two hundred miles of this frontier. But the crippling nature of Germany's attack by visa was evident. I came to Kufstein, a glorious mountain village on the edge of Austria. It was within motor-coach distance of Munich. In normal years as many as a thousand visitors would spend their Sunday afternoons there. It was as silent and deserted as if war had already swept over it. So far as the livelihood of the majority of the villagers was concerned, it was as if their water had been cut off at the main. Their chief source of income in the summer had been the letting of a room for a few Austrian schillings to the German students in the grip of *Wanderlust*. Now no students passed their way. Was it to be wondered at that they cursed poor little Dollfuss, and fell an easy prey to Nazi propaganda?

I turned west again and came to Innsbruck. It was clearly the chief danger-point of Austrian independence.



I realised something of the position when I called on the Minister for Public Security, Dr. Steidle. I had hardly knocked on the door of his private house before a uniformed soldier had crossed the road to ask my business. My reply was apparently so unsatisfactory that I was escorted under guard into the Minister's presence.

When I met Dr. Steidle, I realised the reason for this. His arm was still in a sling, the result of the bullet-wound inflicted two months ago by a German student who had waited for three hours outside his house. The police were taking no chances a second time.

One of the main difficulties of the Austro-German frontier has been presented by these German students at Innsbruck. Out of the three thousand students here, two thousand were German, and, of these, eighteen hundred were militant Nazis.

The rain came down in torrents, and I spent an hour or two gazing into the streaming windows of picture-postcard shops, always a good index of political feeling. They were full of pictures of Nazi parades. The wearing of uniform had been proscribed, and all propaganda stifled, but here was an opportunity to advertise the cause that was obviously very difficult to check, so pictures dating from a time when it was not illegal to be a Brown Shirt were brought out, in the same kind of spirit as, before the rise of Hitler, Royalist stationers paraded photographs of the pre-war pageant of empire. I talked with various officials, and found that the greatest alarm prevailed; the possibility of invasion was ever present in their minds. Permission had just been obtained from the Powers by Austria to arm beyond the thirty thousand allowed by Versailles. Full use of it was to be made in the Tyrol, and plans were already in train for the recruitment of a semi-militarised police force in addition to the Heimwehr. With the rain still dripping from the carriage roofs, I made the journey to Anton am Arlberg. In the failing light, I could see on the mountain-sides the huts in happier years occupied by German students. There was no sign of life about them now. My three days' tour of the frontier

districts had taught me that they were not merely Nazi, but that they had the best economic reasons for being so.

It was clear that Austria's danger was not likely to end with Italy's pledge of support for her independence.

Three days afterwards I was in Wales, in the wild mountain district of Merionethshire, that is delightfully inaccessible to all but the hardiest tourist by a single-track line from Ruabon to Barmouth. I had known it before the war, when, holiday after holiday, my family would take lodgings somewhere along that glorious strip of coast-line between Towyn and Criccieth. I know no part of England that has less altered in a world rent elsewhere by catastrophic changes. There are a few petrol-pumps; and the black-bearded stationmaster at Barmouth Junction, whom we used to call John the Baptist, is no more; and, to the shame of the Office of Works, one of the dungeons in Harlech Castle contains a ladies' lavatory, and Port Meirion, from being a bogey house occupied by an old lady and a heaving mountain of rats, is now a delightful hotel much favoured by Sir Gerald du Maurier. For the rest, it is the same, even to the adoration of Mr. Lloyd George. The only difference is that motor-coaches instead of horse-brakes take tourists to peer and gape outside his house.

Fresh from the frontier perils of Austria, in a country not very dissimilar, it all seemed symbolic of the essential changelessness of human struggles. My mind went back to Agadir, dimly remembered together with the great railway strike and the flaming heat of that August of 1911. Then the situation had been saved by Lloyd George. Vaguely I recalled the thrill of that Agadir speech—"the little Welsh attorney," as they dubbed him then, suddenly calling the Kaiser's bluff with all the prestige behind him of being the unchallenged spokesman of Radical England.

"Britain at all hazards . . . place and prestige . . . her potent influence . . . invaluable . . . the cause of liberty . . . cannot allow herself to be treated . . . of no account in the cabinet of nations . . . peace at that price a humiliation. . ."

His voice penetrated from the Mansion House to the

innermost conclaves of the War Party in Germany, and in a week Europe had been saved from the abyss. If only it had been said a week earlier three years later. . . .

And now, once again, our protests had been treated as of no account, the risk of our intervention in the cause of justice regarded as negligible. Was not another Agadir speech needed ? But who was to make it, and to it who in these days would respond ?

These were the two questions that I kept putting to myself, and to anyone who would listen to me, as I walked along the beach at Harlech, and I fancy I heard the echo of mocking laughter far away in the deep caverns of Snowdon.

## CHAPTER LIII

### I REVISIT BERLIN

**I**N A FORTNIGHT I was once more at Croydon aerodrome, embarking for Vienna.

Chancellor Dollfuss was faced with a new danger, this time from within Austria itself. Trouble had broken out within his own ranks, between the Right and Left wings. On the extreme Right was Prince Stahremberg, the leader of the Heimwehr—ostensibly a defence force, but really indistinguishable from the Fascists, from whom it was supposed to draw its funds. Prince Stahremberg, intellectually a lightweight, had a certain romantic appeal as a kind of feudal prince. His Heimwehr had, indeed, first been recruited from among the retainers on his estates. He now came forward as the vehement protagonist of the Fascist methods of Government. The Socialists must be driven out root and branch. Parliamentarism must be ended, the corporate State must be created. Only by these means could the Nazis be overthrown. It was an attempt to call in Beelzebub to drive out Beelzebub.

At the other end of the pole was Herr Winkler, the leader of such Liberalism as remained, anxious to preserve democracy, and secure the acquiescence, if not the co-operation, of the Socialists.

Though they both professed unswerving support to Dollfuss, they were competing for the soul of the Government. It looked as if Stahremberg would win. He was credited with the intention of a march on the Rathaus, the overthrow of the Vienna municipality, and a Fascist *coup d'état* to force Dollfuss's hand.

Austria was once more front-page news. Though still nominally on holiday, I looked in at the offices of my paper. I was, in fact, on the way to stay with my sister in Norfolk. Tom Clarke, who was the editor, saw me, and suddenly

said, "Can you leave for Vienna to-night?" In the best traditions of the cub reporter on the films, I replied, "Had I not better leave this afternoon?"

Tom Clarke is a delightful man to work with, in that there is never any danger of being bored while he is about. He radiates such energy that one knew instinctively, almost before one had entered the doors, if he was in the office. The morning editorial conference was always an adventure when he was presiding over it. One never knew whether one would half an hour afterwards be chartering a taxi to Chequers, or finding out the time of the next aeroplane to Angora.

I retired to pore over time-tables. The air route which I had taken before was now closed. There was nothing for it, if I wanted to avoid the forty-hour railway journey, but to go through Berlin. On enquiry, I learnt that every seat was already taken for the flight from Berlin to Vienna. A flight to Vienna must therefore involve a break in the journey of several hours in Berlin.

There was the best possible reason why I did not want at that moment to re-visit Berlin. I had written an article for *Nash's Magazine* on Hitlerism in action entitled, "Little Man, What Now?" A week before, it had been proscribed by General Goering as "likely to endanger public order," and every copy had been seized, and subsequent issues of *Nash's* banned. Previous to that, my account of the conditions of the Breslau Concentration Camp had caused representations to be made to the British Embassy. All my friends were saying, in a curiously irritating way, "Well, it will be a long time before you will go to Berlin again."

I did not expect arrest, but I thought it just possible that a few Storm Troopers might arrange a rough house for me, and that the German Government would express their regrets when it was too late. Only a few days before, one of the junior correspondents of *The Times* had been the centre of a stormy scene because he had dared to overtake a car containing distinguished Nazi staff officers.

However, Berlin was the shortest route to Vienna, and I

could not afford the delay of a train journey. But I must confess that it was with a faint sense of personal anxiety that I descended from the aeroplane at the Templehof. For the moment I thought it was justified. I was barely down the ladder when I was confronted by an enormous official. "You are Herr Barenice?" I admitted it in terror at the Jewish twist that had been given to my name. "You must ring up the British Embassy immediately." Under escort, I went to the telephone box.

Horrid visions of the House of Commons during the Moscow arrests floated before me. Would something of the same sort happen again? I heard Sir John Simon saying, "Our Ambassador, immediately he heard of the arrest of the Hon. Member for North Bristol, requested an interview, as he had every right to do." And there would be sympathetic cheers. Well, would there? Might not the Tories say, "That fellow Bernays—he damned well deserved it. He knew what risks he was taking." However, in the midst of these melancholy reflections, I hear the cheerful voice of one of the secretaries at the Embassy asking me to lunch.

My fears as to my personal safety were quite groundless. There was not the slightest difficulty. I have not even got a stamp on my passport to bear witness of my temerity.

It is clear that foreigners, whatever their political opinions, can travel through Germany without let or hindrance. They may be watched, but they will not be molested—officially, at any rate. For the rest, I found the atmosphere of Berlin more disquieting even than in June.

All hope, for instance, of a possible compromise in the Austro-German imbroglio collapses in the first three minutes of a conversation with a German Nazi. They want nothing less than complete surrender. They regard Austria as a German province; the German officials issue instructions to many Austrian business firms as if they were in Nazi territory. The German Government will not be satisfied until Austria is as much under its control as Bavaria. There was, if anything, an additional swagger about the Brown

Shirts. It may have been their uniforms, which had a new splash of colour in the shape of red, black, and green tabs, according to the district in Germany from which they came. It was a sign that they were now organised regionally, like the conscript armies in the war. It was a further breach in the legend—thin from the start—that the Brown Shirts were only an auxiliary police force. The knife they carry had grown in size. It is a dagger now. It cannot be long before it is undisguisedly a bayonet.

Then there are the blue uniforms of the Air Force, which are an entirely new feature—the result of that extraordinary “Air Raid” over Berlin in July, when nobody but Government officials appear to have seen either the aeroplanes or the inflammatory leaflets they are supposed to have dropped.

The demonstrations seemed to be growing in size and stupidity. That afternoon they were lopping the trees in the Unter den Linden, and erecting loud-speakers down its whole lovely length, and more and more flags were being fastened into place in the shop windows. It might have been the day after some stupendous victory, or at least the celebration of an emperor’s visit. Actually it was in preparation for Captain—now General—Goering’s drive to open the new Prussian Council of State. Goering’s love of uniforms had developed into an obsession. I heard, for the first time, the story of his order, after the pipes had burst in his bathroom, for the production of his admiral’s coat.

A new exhibition had appeared since I was there last. It was in honour of Schlageter, the young man who blew up the bridge in occupied territory and was executed by the French. The youth of the nation filed past his coffin in hundreds every day.

A colonial exhibition was then in progress. The official guide was daily pointing out the number of people who died of sleeping sickness in the African colonies when they were held by Germany, and the number that die under the mandate of Great Britain. Lest there should be any doubt as to the object of giving these statistics, the guide added that the

English had no interest in fighting disease among the native populations.

The preparations against gas attack were growing more elaborate and fantastic than before. There were orders that the attics should be denuded of any materials that might catch fire in the case of an air raid, and special relief of rates were offered to all householders who would construct bomb-proof shelters. I have not the slightest doubt that the German Government had no real fear of aerial attacks. From whom, after all, would they come? It was a calculated attempt to exploit fears, and so fan the war spirit into fever heat.

The more responsible of the Nazis continued to assure me that all this was only the ebullition of high spirits, and was of no importance. It was merely a nation, after years of suppression of its natural instincts for discipline and order, rather childishly indulging in war games. I wish that I thought that they were right.

There was a deliberate infusion of the war spirit into the boys of Germany. I picked up the organ of the Nazi youth movement. On one page was the advertisement of a knife engraved, "For Blood and Honour." On another page a revolver, complete with ammunition, was announced for sale. In the schools, five hours a week were being devoted to military instruction. There were inflammatory posters with a highly spiced account of the Versailles Treaty, and ending with the words, "Death rather than Slavery."

In the meantime, economically the country was stronger. The expenditure on public works, and the ceaseless propaganda of employing more men, whatever the cost, had had a temporary effect. Then the persecution of the Jews had brought a harvest of new jobs. There was no talk of it slowing up, though a few months ago I had been assured that the discriminatory laws were only temporary and would be reviewed and revised that September.

In other ways there had been a redistribution of jobs. Two men were now doing the work that was done by one before the new order. It had, of course, meant a restriction in comfort. All classes were being forced down to a lower standard



of living. But it made no difference to the prestige and power of the Government.

Many observers thought at one time that Hitlerism would not survive that winter. I saw nothing to substantiate that view. Hitlerism is in no danger of crashing from within. But the danger of it creating an explosion from outside—on the surface, at any rate—appeared to be growing greater month by month.

For the first time I heard seriously discussed the possibility of an ultimatum from France to Germany to stop re-arming, and an immediate preventive war if it was refused.

## CHAPTER LIV

### DOLLFUSS RIDES THE WHIRLWIND

I ARRIVED in Vienna in September 1933 to find that, as far as the Nazi attacks were concerned, the situation had somewhat eased. The Austrian Legion was suffering from desertions. The food was not good and the easy-going Austrians were clearly not relishing the discipline of the Prussian drill-sergeant.

Every month that the invasion was delayed it became less likely, for the snows fall early in the mountain regions and a successful march could not be made on sledges.

Another important counter against a Nazi revolution was the almost uncanny efficiency of the Austrian police force. It was the creation of Metternich, and, almost alone of the machinery of the empire, it survived the crash. The country is riddled with spies. Every concierge is in the pay of the police, and every prominent man has his dossier at the Police Presidency, often a valuable weapon of blackmail by one politician of another. The records are kept in a steel room. It is in all the best traditions of Phillips Oppenheim. By these records the police claim to know the movements of every Nazi sympathiser, and, at the first hint of trouble, to be able to lay them by the heels. Within Austria itself the Nazis were deficient in arms. Such as existed, the police claimed they could lay hands on at any moment. But the most serious need of the Nazis was for a leader. Herr Habicht lacked personality, and in any case was in exile. The rest were in gaol. It was also doubtful if the Germans could indefinitely finance the movement. Sixty million marks (about three million pounds) had already been spent in propaganda.

The Socialists chafed at the Dollfuss Government, but sullenly submitted to it. They would fight to the death, they said, against the Nazis. They claimed that if the Government would only trust them, they alone could be responsible for the defence of Vienna against any invasion.

I was also impressed by the signs of the continued growth in Austrian patriotism. The Austrian flag—red, white, and red—which was almost unknown prior to the arrival of Dollfuss, appeared now everywhere. Under the Socialists the history text-books contained nothing but abuse and ridicule of Austria's past. Now every cinema had some film depicting the glories of Austria's history.

But, so far as Dollfuss's internal position was concerned, it was obvious that he was in grave difficulties. He had an extraordinarily intractable team to drive. There were the Socialists, who gave him reluctant support as long as he professed a belief in democracy ; and there were the Fascists, who were ready to back him heart and soul if only he would declare war on the Socialists. The only support in his death-grapple with the Nazis that he could lean upon with any certainty were the Catholic coalition parties, and they did not number more than twenty-five per cent of the country.

The pressure from the Right and the Left grew stronger. Prince Stahremberg threatened a *coup d'état* if the Socialists were not proscribed, and the Socialists threatened a general strike if any further attacks were made upon them. Between these two forces it looked as though, after all, the Austrian Legion might have a clear run to Vienna.

What was Chancellor Dollfuss to do ? I saw him a few days after my arrival. It was difficult to realise that the little man with the wide-eyed, almost child-like appearance had really a grip on the situation. But he had. It was remarkable to see the sure and swift way in which his mind was moving to the solution of the new crisis.

First of all, there must be no compromise with the Nazis. Obviously he could not rally the country for a half-hearted surrender. I asked him about the danger of an armed invasion of Austria across the Bavarian frontier. He said, " I hope, and am convinced, that official Germany will take no action. But, after all, we have learned of the folly and irresponsibility of certain circles in Bavaria, amongst whom I must place the so-called Austrian Legion, who are still being

supported by ardent propaganda through the Munich broadcasting station ; we cannot deny that there is, unfortunately, a considerable possibility of such a development.

" We have taken all precautions to be effectively prepared to deal with such an invasion. Italy, being a neighbour of Austria, is obviously strongly interested in the territorial integrity of this country. And I can, without fear, prophesy that Germany would be absolutely isolated should this invasion actually take place."

It was a hundred per cent anti-Nazi declaration, and his object was clearly to consolidate such strength as he possessed. For he was emphatic in his declaration about the Jews. There had been talk of a mild persecution of the Jews as a sop to the Nazis. Dollfuss would have none of it.

" Being a Christian," he said, " the character of a man is more important to me than the race. I look upon Austria as one unit, a country of seven million voters. I think that we must look to the soul of a man, not to his nationality."

But what sort of organisation was this united front to have ? " We want an authoritative Government, formed on the basis of the Guild State, which does not necessarily imply what some people mean by the word Fascism." One thing it did imply, and that was that, in the choice between Winkler and Stahremberg, Dollfuss had plumped for the Fascists, or a position as near the Fascists as he dare go. A few nights later I was torn from sleep by the telephone bell at half past two in the morning. It was a kindly fellow correspondent ringing me up to tell me that Dollfuss was at that moment re-organising his Cabinet. Reuter had flashed it to London, and there were no further details. Happily, it was too late for my paper to publish anything for their morning edition, and, with the uncomfortable feeling that Dollfuss had made his first big mistake, I turned over and went to sleep.

It was a strange Cabinet whose faces stared down upon Vienna in the early editions of the so-called evening papers the following morning. Herr Winkler had disappeared : four ardent monarchists, including a general of seventy-five, had been elevated from their obscurity ; and Chancellor Dollfuss

had himself assumed six portfolios. Dollfuss had at any rate pleased one wing of his supporters. The murmurs of discontent in the Fascist Heimwehr died away. They were delighted that their idol, Major Fey, had become Vice-Chancellor. Even Prince Stahremberg, who had threatened to give trouble, had now come to heel with a pledge of personal support to Dollfuss so long as he maintained his present course.

What was more, Dollfuss had pleased the Right without unduly alienating the Left. The Liberal Landbund was, in spite of the dismissal of Herr Winkler, satisfied with its two representatives in the Cabinet, and had passed a resolution in support of the new Government.

The union, under the personal control of the Chancellor, of the police and the army, who were inclined to be mutually antagonistic, had strengthened Austria's power of resistance to the Nazis in the event either of street fighting or frontier warfare.

In a word, Dollfuss had for the time being ended the troublesome internal situation. Winkler and Stahremberg were not against his leadership, but they were snarling at one another. It could not be tolerated. The little man had turned upon them all and with a few swift changes of personnel had restored complete harmony. He had done it by methods all his own. Cabinet crises in Austria usually last a month. That was completed in twelve hours. When he was Cabinet-making, and a supporter proved difficult, he would not let him go until he had argued him into agreement. He kept Herr Winkler until five o'clock in the morning. Winkler begged that the discussion might be postponed until they had had some sleep. The little man was adamant ; he would not go to bed until he had got what he wanted, and he didn't.

Dr. Dollfuss's new Cabinet represented a remarkable triumph of personality. For all that, there was a feeling of disquiet among responsible people at the turn events were taking. However small seemed the changes, the powerful forces who would use the Nazi danger to strangle democracy had undoubtedly been strengthened.

Before many days were out, renewed warnings were given by France and Great Britain to Chancellor Dollfuss that they would not tolerate the employment of Hitlerism to keep out the Hitlerites. That was the danger obviously inherent in the reconstructed Austrian Government. All the framework was there for a future Nazi Cabinet to function.

## CHAPTER LV

### SOCIALISM ON THE RUN

**T**HE RECONSTRUCTED Cabinet was a gesture of defiance to the Socialists. Their offers of help had been flouted. Though they were the largest party in Parliament they were to have no consideration from the Government.

The Parliament to which they had been elected was doomed. The new Cabinet decided immediately upon the summoning of an advisory council, consisting of representatives of the trade unions, the employers, the professions, and the Chambers of Commerce. Decrees were to be submitted to them for approval. If it proved a success it would become a permanent part of the new constitution of the corporate State. The Fascists had not merely won a temporary victory.

What were the Socialists to do? They had, on paper, an immense following. In Parliament they had seventy-one members to the sixty-six of the coalition parties round Dollfuss. In the Rathaus they had overwhelming support—a four to one majority against any hostile combination. There was no reason to suppose that their numbers were diminishing. On a recent memorial to the President, organised by the Socialists, asking him to summon Parliament, there were 1,250,000 signatures.

I sought out Dr. Bauer, the only leader of the Austrian Socialists of any importance. We discussed the position in the offices of the *Arbeiter Zeitung*, the Socialist paper. Every day, two hours before it went to press, every word of it had to be passed by the censor. As Bauer's conversation really ranged over the whole position of the Socialist Party in Austria, and indeed the future of democracy, it is perhaps worth giving in full, especially in the light of the recent tragic events. Dr. Bauer said to me: "Among all the political parties in Austria, a Socialist Party is obviously the most implacable enemy of Hitlerism. While one thinks of an

understanding between the ruling Christian Social Party and the Nazis, no truce is possible between Hitlerism and the Socialist Party, whom the Nazis want to destroy.

"The Austrian Socialists represent more than forty per cent of the electorate, and form the strongest party in the country. During recent months, while Austria was menaced by Hitlerism in Germany and its following within Austria's own borders, the Socialists have shown the utmost restraint.

"The Austrian workers, led by the Socialist Party, have kept a cool head in face of the fact that the Dollfuss Government has gone a long way to abolish Parliament, suspend the liberties of the individual citizen, curtailed the right of organised labour, and cut down by unconstitutional decrees the financial resources of the city of Vienna, which has a two-thirds Socialist majority on its town council.

"The workers have exercised a large measure of self-control, because they realise that a struggle between the Government and the Socialist Party would give the Nazis a chance to stir up trouble in the frontier provinces, supported by raids from Germany.

"The recent events, however, make it doubtful how long Austrian Labour can continue to stand aside.

"The Fascist Heimwehr, whose influence has been considerably strengthened by the reconstruction of the Dollfuss Government, is driving the Government towards suspending the self-government of the city of Vienna, dissolving the Socialist Party, replacing the trade unions under control, and imposing a Fascist constitution on the country.

"Every one of these threatened measures would inevitably meet with the utmost resistance by the workers, and would automatically lead to a general strike. The Austrian workers have learned from the tragic experience of their German comrades.

"They are not willing to submit without fighting to the Fascist domination—whether it be the Fascism of the Nazis or the Fascism of the Heimwehr.

"If such dramatic events should happen, there would certainly be a danger that the struggle between the workers



and the Heimwehr would offer an opportunity to the Nazis which might not only develop into a dangerous situation for Austria, but might even lead to a danger to Central European peace.

"Should such a disaster occur, the Austrian Socialist Party has proved by its attitude during the recent months that it cannot be held to blame.

"Responsibility would fall on those who, in the very moment when the country is threatened by Hitlerism, are waging war against the forces which are the strongest opponents of the Nazis.

"It rests with the Government whether Socialists will be able to prevent a catastrophe which hitherto they have tried hard to avoid."

As I came away I bought a copy of the latest edition of the *Arbeiter Zeitung*. The front page appeared once to have contained a leading article. But, beyond its heading, "A Call to the Nation," nothing remained but a series of blanks. Otto Bauer might speak, but the Government could ensure that nobody heard him. That evening it was announced that the Government would in future segregate the political from the ordinary prisoners. It was the shadow of the concentration camp. I realised that what Bauer had said to me, for all its apparent strength and sincerity, was just highly dangerous froth. The hour of the Socialists had passed.

For this they were not a little to blame. Though the largest party, they would not accept the responsibility of Government. They rejected with scorn any idea of co-operation with another party. They were content to wait for their majority. But, as the years passed, it was clear that they were not likely to increase their strength. They did not understand the peasant mentality. Their methods of propaganda—vehement, raucous, ruthless—that dazzled Vienna, terrified the Upper Austrians.

They were theorists, and, as long as they dominated politics, Parliament remained out of touch with the lives of the people. This tendency to unreality was accentuated by the list system of election, which makes inevitable the soulless

control of the party machines. Parliament droned away, discussing personal issues or Marxist dogma, while unemployment leapt up hundred thousand on hundred thousand. There was no interest in Parliament, and, when it collapsed, its loss was hardly felt, except by the politicians who were put out of a job.

The Nazi attacks began, and the Christian Socials took control, not because they were the largest party, but because the Socialists ran away from responsibilities. All the Socialists would do was to offer negative support. Unpopular measures were needed, and they would not take any risks to promote them. The crisis deepened, and their only contribution was to mourn the end of a parliamentary system that they had done their best to make unworkable.

A few days later the delegation of English trade-union leaders arrived from England to take council with the Austrian Labour leaders on the position.

I saw them sitting on the platform at a great demonstration of working-class solidarity in the Prater, Vienna's Hyde Park. Herr Sietz, the Lord Mayor of Vienna, was the chief speaker. He was attacking the idea of the authoritarian State propounded by Dr. Dollfuss. "The only authority we recognise is the will of the people," he was saying; "the whole idea of an authoritarian State is a swindle." This was too much for the police who were attending the meeting. They immediately caused the loud-speakers to be switched off, and, for the overwhelming proportion of the crowd, the Lord Mayor was henceforward inaudible.

It was the first taste the T.U.C. had had of dictatorship, and I hope that they appreciated the lesson. Austria was swinging violently Right not a little because the Socialists had so lamentably failed to provide a safe alternative.

There was a further unpleasant parallel. The English Socialist Party had crashed to disaster because, though most of the leaders realised that cuts were necessary, they thought that it would be disastrous to the movement if they had any share in the unpopularity for them. The Austrian Socialist Party in like manner had shirked the burdens of

government in a crisis. The result was that every effort was being made to ensure that they never had an opportunity of government again. In each case they had played into the hands of the enemy.

Do the trade-union leaders realise this? The future of democracy and all that goes with it may depend on the answer.

Every Austrian Socialist I met said to me: "We must avoid the mistakes the German Socialists made." They had committed every one of them, and in consequence they were just beginning to reap the same bitter fruits.

Otto Bauer might protest and threaten. He was talking to the air. "I can call spirits from the vasty deep," said Owen Glendower to Hotspur. "Why, so can I. So can any man," replied Hotspur. "But will they come when you do call for them?" That was the position of Otto Bauer in his relations to Dollfuss. He could talk about a general strike, but could he make it effective? A general strike would hasten, not the return of Parliament, but the triumph of the Fascists. Otto Bauer would be digging his own concentration camp.

Those were my thoughts as I wandered back to my hotel that October morning. It looks now as if they were being proved tragically accurate. The Socialists, last February, goaded by the attacks on them, did make some show of resistance. There were feeble and spasmodic outbreaks of violence. They had collected some old rifles and machine guns together. It was Fey's chance. For months he had been waiting for it. With swift and smashing force he turned and rent them. The only difference is that Bauer, instead of being in a concentration camp, is in the refuge city of Prague. A few obscure working men have been hanged. It is a tragic story, and it is a common one in post-war Europe. The Fascists never win by themselves. They are the creation of an unreal and stupid Socialism invariably led from the rear.

The plight of the Austrian Socialist Party has its lesson for our own Socialist Party in England. The rump of fifty in the House of Commons to-day is a witness to the

futility of their non co-operation with the Liberals. Before the election of 1929 they had a great chance of creating a really stable Radical majority. Mr. Lloyd George had a programme of social reconstruction which would have made the Parliament that carried it out as memorable as any of the great reforming Parliaments in the past. All that was needed was a measure of give and take in the constituencies so far as wrecking candidatures in the General Election was concerned, and an effort at establishing a *modus vivendi* in the House of Commons afterwards. Mr. C. P. Scott, as editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, devoted the last years of his life to working for this coalition of the Radical forces. It was all to no purpose. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald would have none of it. He attacked the Liberals with a vehemence and venom that he never applied to the Conservatives.

The result was that, when the crisis came, he had not the solid backing of responsible Radicalism which would have enabled him to stand up to his extremists. They captured the party machine, drove almost the whole of the Liberal vote against them, and established, in the election that followed, the largest Conservative majority the country had ever seen.

A worse mistake is now threatened. Sir Stafford Cripps is insisting that Labour must never again take office without power and if it achieves power it must use it to carry out a revolution, by orders in council, within the lifetime of a single Parliament. Either course is disastrous for the triumph of progressive causes. The country will give short shrift to a party that, though it is the largest in the country, refuses to assume the responsibilities of that position. It will equally not tolerate a party that is flirting with Hitlerism. What it wants is a responsible Radical alternative and if it cannot get it, it will establish Toryism in perpetuity, or, in the last resort, dictatorship.

## CHAPTER LVI

### THE RIDDLE OF THE HAPSBURGS

A NEW AND EXCITING possibility suddenly appeared on the horizon of Austrian politics. The cause of the Hapsburgs, that had seemed as dead as that of the Orleanists in France, suddenly became a live issue. Rumour spread like a gorse fire through Vienna that the Archduke Otto, son of the late Emperor Karl and grandson of the Emperor Franz Josef, was making a serious bid for the throne.

One Sunday afternoon there appeared a vivid splash of colour in the Vienna streets. The ex-officers of the old Imperial régime sallied forth in the red breeches and sky-blue tunics of their pre-war regiments. That same afternoon three towns—Mainau, Hain, and Ruggelsdorf—presented by proxy to Archduke Otto their freedom, and with it the opportunity of making a pronouncement, the gist of which was circulated to the Press some hours before the ceremony.

Outstanding phrases in it were : “ I absolutely reject Fascism for Austria, and see the solution only in a constitutional monarchy along democratic lines, similar to that in England.”

“ I hope that the Hapsburg law will soon be revoked by an emergency decree, but I consider the moment for successful restoration is not yet ripe, since it must be realised only in the legal way, and since the present constitution of the Dollfuss Government does not ensure the necessary guarantee.”

“ I absolutely refuse to be drawn into adventurous *Putsch* attempts.”

“ The South Tyrol must be returned to Austria. The Hapsburgs could never accept the Brenner as the boundary. But this is not incompatible with Signor Mussolini’s revisionist doctrines.”

“ As regards the union of Austria and Hungary under the

Hapsburg sceptre, I would consider this only on condition that the treaties of St. Germain and the Trianon are revised in respect of the Burgenland."

The publication of this created something of a sensation. If the venue for it had been Arlberg or the Tyrol, it would have been of little importance, for these provinces have always been monarchist. But the towns concerned were situated around St. Polten, within twenty-five miles of the gates of Vienna. Moreover, these activities were reported with no sign of disapproval in the *Reichpost*, the Government organ. I saw the next day, in a village within an hour of Vienna, the black and yellow flag of the Hapsburgs. It was left unmolested by the police.

Men began to weigh up the favourable factors in the situation. Were there not four monarchists in the new Cabinet? There was Major Fey, the Vice-Chancellor who was the head of the Government while Dollfuss was at Geneva, a typical ex-officer of the Imperial régime in his ardent loyalty to the Royal House. Then, again, the Socialists were finding the restrictions on their activities so exasperating that, as one of them put it to me, "We were really better off under the Empire."

It was pointed out that the return of Otto would be one way of escape for the Nazis. It would mean that the peasants of Upper Austria who had gone Nazi would almost to a man rally round a Hapsburg as the alternative. They were Royalist first and Nazis a long way afterwards. Though the position of Dollfuss had been strengthened, so far as the Heimwehr were concerned, by his recent flirtation with Fascism, so far as the Nazis were concerned it had been weakened. It was felt that Dollfuss was now virtually under the control of Italy. Austrian independence had already gone. All that Dollfuss was offering was the alternative of dependence on Italy to dependence on Germany, and there was a growing feeling amongst Austrians, who had never labelled themselves as Nazis, that the dominion of a Germany whose language they spoke was preferable to Italy, whose language they did not speak and with whom they had been

enemies in the war. The return of Otto would draw a red herring right across this sentiment.

There was little likelihood that Otto himself would attempt a *Putsch*. His father had done that in Hungary in 1921, with disastrous consequences. But it was quite possible that Dollfuss would himself invite him back, as the one way out of Austria's difficulties. In that event there would be no reluctance on the part of Otto to respond.

That was the position last September, and it remains the position now. It is indeed worth enquiring a little further who is the young man who sits in a country house in Belgium waiting for the summons back to the throne of the Hapsburgs. Otto is the eldest of seven children. All his life he has been educated by his ambitious mother, the Empress Zita, for the throne of his fathers. Until the age of sixteen he was never allowed to see a map of the new Austria that emerged, lopped of its empire, from the hurricane of 1918. He is now a good-looking young man of twenty-one with little to do but regret the past or plot for the future.

Dreaming with him, either at his mock Court or in the castles of Austria and Hungary that still remain tenanted, are an aristocracy as arrogant and stupid as when Mr. Wickham Steed in 1912, at the height of their power and magnificence, foretold their downfall. The staff at the Austrian and Hungarian legations this winter were forbidden to visit *Re-Union in Vienna*, Mr. Robert Sherwood's play at the Lyric. I do not know why. I should have thought that the Austrian aristocracy themselves would have regarded the play, if as a caricature of their manners and mentality, a very mild one. Their hearts are still in the "Bitter Sweet" that Vienna still was in 1914, before a half-witted young man let off a pistol in the noonday glare at Sarajevo, and, as Mr. Guedalla would put it, "the last candles of the eighteenth century went out." They can recall the days when a challenge to a duel was the immediate answer to a fancied slight, and only those who had the requisite number of quarterings were invited to the great State balls at Schönbrunn, and the opera-house was a blaze of uniforms and

tiaras, and thousands of pounds changed hands nightly at the Jockey Club.

And now ? The palace of the Hofburg is a museum and the glorious gardens of Schönbrunn are a public park. The musical comedy uniforms have given way to the drab khaki of the tiny professional army, and it is possible, for considerably less than the price of a stall in a London theatre, to take one's seat in the Imperial box at the opera. Yet less than a quarter of a century separates the two worlds. While I was in Vienna, Sir Walford Selby came out to take up his duties as British Minister to the Austrian Republic. His last visit to Vienna had been in 1910, when, as a young man, he was sent out as emissary to announce the accession of King George to the Emperor in person.

The aristocracy cannot adapt itself to the change. It was thought that the death of Madame Sacher would snap the link. As proprietress of the Hôtel Sacher she had remained on after the Revolution, still reserving her great rooms for the aristocrats—sometimes hungry and almost destitute—and forgetting to send in the bill. But Sacher's, with its plum-coloured curtains and heavy Empire furniture, still struggles on as the rendezvous of the remnant. So does the Jockey Club, though now without barber or kitchen. There the ex-officers sit, each year a little older and a little feebler, but murmuring still the oft-told tale of the gala nights of the Empire and exchanging gossip of the marriages and intrigues of their families.

For years they were without hope. The monarchist party, judged by electoral figures, does not exist. At the last election, in spite of proportional representation, it did not achieve enough votes to return a solitary member to Parliament. According to the Austrian *Year-Book*, it polled the farcical figure of 150 votes.

But the situation has changed since then. Dollfuss has done more than awaken Austrian patriotism. He has awakened the old love of pageantry that was one of the main props of the empire. Every week-end the Viennese pour up the long, straight drive to the Palace of Schönbrunn. They love



everything that reminds them of the Emperor Franz Josef. I cannot believe that when he was alive he was accorded a tenth of the veneration he receives now. It is inevitable that some of this fervour of adoration should extend to the curly-headed great-nephew they remember playing in the gardens of Schönbrunn. Dotted all over Vienna now are Royalist stationers' shops, that seem to sell nothing but picture-postcards of Otto—arrayed in all the glory of the old Imperial uniform ; in the costume of a Tyrolean peasant ; posed like a film star in smartly cut lounge suit ; or, with his family, on the steps of his country house of exile.

Dr. Dollfuss does nothing to discourage this feeling of loyalty to the Hapsburgs. In his own way he is himself trying to create something of the old glamour in Austrian Government.

During the Catholic Congress that month a State banquet was given in the long gallery of Schönbrunn. The chandeliers were lit, the old silver brought out, uniforms glittered once again, and a friend who remembered the old days told me that the 1933 model was not so different from 1913.

The Hapsburgs are not suffering from the same disabilities as the Hohenzollerns. They did not desert their country in the hour of its direst need. It was rather their country that deserted them. After the Emperor Karl had put his signature to his abdication in the agonies of November 1918, he was left absolutely alone in his vast palace. All the long afternoon he roamed through the empty rooms. Then, when darkness came, one faithful servant crept back and scraped together some kind of supper for the heir of all the Hapsburg greatness.

But there are immense practical difficulties in the way of a restoration. A restoration is only really practical politics if the Austro-Hungarian Empire were re-created. But, if that were done, the modern Hungary, being larger than the modern Austria, would certainly insist that the capital be Buda Pesth.

Moreover, the dominant party in Hungary, led by General Gombos and the Regent Admiral Horthy, is against a monarchy.

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Austria and Hungary have quite different interests. Hungary is concentrating her whole energy and purpose in revision of the treaties. Austria has no hunger for lost territories, except perhaps in the Tyrol. But even here she is quite prepared to cede what she has lost in perpetuity, if thereby she can make permanent the friendship of Italy. Then there is Czecho-Slovakia, carved out of the territories of the Hapsburg Empire, which has no intention of surrendering its independence.

Sentiment as a basis of Government is not enough. In these drab days there has to be some economic advantage, and that is singularly lacking in the question of a restoration of kingship to Austria. "Will Otto give us bread?" That is the question they ask in Vienna.

Then there are the aristocracy themselves. They have no plan for the future but a restoration of the past. The Emperor Wilhelm never met personally a Social Democrat member of the Reichstag until a few weeks before his abdication. There is the same outlook in the Austrian nobility. I remember commenting to one of them on the splendid open-air baths that have been opened in Vienna since the war so that the whole population can sun-bathe at the weekends—a real Lansbury's Lido. "Yes," he said, grandly misinterpreting the tone of my question, "are they not disgusting? The riff-raff of the slums exposing their horrible, misshapen bodies. Of course, it would never be tolerated if the Court returned." It was selfishness on such a scale as to be almost magnificent.

It is impossible to argue with people like that. One can at any rate admire their loyalty. The devotion to the Hapsburgs, however misplaced or foolishly expressed, does not lend itself to flippant comment. It unites classes in a way that no other sentiment ever seems able to achieve. While in Vienna I collected picture-postcards of the old Emperor, and happened to put them on my mantel-piece in my hotel bedroom. The valet was quite overcome. "*Unser Kaiser*," he kept muttering to himself, and, to my embarrassment, I saw that he was in tears. It was a

pathetic sight to see him dusting the postcards each morning as if they were some priceless Sèvres china. I felt curiously caddish when I recalled that I had bought them only to illustrate a newspaper article in England.

But the Royalism they worship is as dead as the Jacobite cause. It is like those carriages of some long-forgotten pattern that one still sees in some remote corners of Austria or Hungary. Inside is an old lady dressed in deepest mourning. The coachman is white-whiskered and decrepit ; the horses look as if they ought to have long since been pensioned off, and the ledge at the back where the two stalwart footmen used to stand is empty. Slowly the equipage clip-clops past, and with it the ghost of an age that has long since vanished.

That is the Royalism that they wish to restore. Truly the greatest enemies of Royalism are the Royalists.

## CHAPTER LVII

### SCHÖNBRUNN CASTS ITS SHADOW

**T**HE EXCITEMENT in Royalist circles continued. The three towns which had conferred their freedom on the Archduke Otto followed it up by honouring Chancellor Dollfuss in the same way.

It was clearly a Royalist bait. With a rare shrewdness the Royalists had realised that their main hope of success lay in the potential championship of their cause by the Chancellor. Dollfuss had been a lieutenant in the Imperial Army, and, before he had become Chancellor, was known to have Imperial sympathies.

Prince Max of Hohenberg arrived in Vienna to take soundings of the position. Prince Max is the son of the Archduke Ferdinand, whose murder precipitated the Great War. But for the morganatic marriage of his father, he would be the heir to the Hapsburg throne instead of the Archduke Otto. Yet another uniform appeared in the streets. It was that of the *Sturm Scharen* of Dr. Schuschnigg, the Minister of Justice ; a Catholic and ardent monarchist organisation.

I took a Sunday off to explore the wonders of Schönbrunn. If Otto was really about to return, it seemed advisable to see to what he would return.

What a superb show it is !—the vast courtyard ; the long windows of the reception-rooms, with the double staircase leading up to them ; the rigid formality of the gardens ; the Grecian pillars of the *gloriette* at the end. All the eighteenth century seems to be there—its grandeur ; its formality ; its exclusiveness ; its search for beauty, and its cruel selfishness. Schönbrunn is far easier to people with the past than Versailles. I have never, like most visitors to the Trianon, with a clairvoyance aided by a good memory of Burke, recalled how I first saw the Queen just above the horizon . . . glittering like the morning star full of life and splendour

and joy. But I did feel at Schönbrunn that at any turn in those gravelled paths, flanked by those exquisitely cut limes, I might meet the Emperor in his white uniform, surrounded by his staff in scarlet and blue—the picture in the long gallery come to life. It was the same when I climbed the steep slopes which led to the *gloriette* and the view unfolded itself of the mountains in front and the dome of St. Stephen's behind. All Vienna lay beneath, and it seemed, as its steeples shimmered in the sunshine, not the Vienna of a newspaper correspondent, but the Vienna of history.

What a history, too, that palace had seen. Marie Antoinette had been born there. The King of Rome, heir to all the Buonaparte dynasty, had died there. Napoleon had himself visited it here in the plenitude of his power and glory. Down these paths, the German Kaiser and Franz Josef had discussed that alliance in 1908, which, six years later, had brought Armageddon. Those windows had witnessed the result when in 1918—the ramshackle empire in pieces at last—Franz Josef's successor was forced to abdicate. They had seen kingship in the days of its greatest power, and in the days of its deepest humiliation.

History was written in the very carriages in the stables. There was the great travelling Berlin in which Napoleon had lumbered and thundered his way across Europe. There was the little sociable in which Franz Josef, in his rôle of father of his people, had pottered up and down the Vienna streets. It had something about it still—perhaps it was its simplicity and quaintness—of an old man taking the sunshine on a May morning before the horrors of mass murder came upon the world. There was the funeral carriage, with its ghastly trappings and plumes, that had crawled through the streets in the bitter December days of 1916. How many of them realised that it was the funeral march, not merely of an emperor, but of an empire and a dynasty and an age? Very few, apparently, for there, next to it, was the coronation coach, with its eight cream white horses, that had dragged the Emperor Karl to his coronation. The writer of the Song of Solomon could hardly do justice to the

magnificence of their caparisons. It was clear that in the crises of war not one jot of Imperial splendour was allowed to be abated.

Would Otto really reign here ? Would he sit in that coach, and issue proclamations from that balcony ? Up to then I had weighed up, impersonally, the factors making for a monarchist restoration. On balance they seemed to be favourable. But, actually in the Palace of Schönbrunn itself, it all seemed very different.

Schönbrunn was built for an empire. How could it house the ruler of a country about two-thirds the size of England ? The expense of keeping up the place would be insupportable. Otto's Court had let it be known in secret that the Archduke, for all his protestations, would return, even if only to rule over the Austria of the Peace Treaty. Could any young man, however insensitive, return to Schönbrunn in present political conditions ? Here empires had come to birth. In these rooms the kingdoms of the world had been parcelled out ; all the glory and the pageantry of history were written on these walls. Surely the stones would cry out if they had to shelter a princeling dependent for the existence of his tiny kingdom on the goodwill of Italy, and loans from Paris and London.

There is something to be said for kings. With the passage of years there has been some reaction in favour of monarchy as an institution. Sentiment plays a big part in this changing tide of opinion. In the poverty and humiliation and despair that have been the accompaniment of the post-war years, men tend to look back to the monarchy as a golden age of pageantry and peace. Incompetence is forgiven ; the old social exclusiveness is regarded as an amiable idiosyncrasy ; corruption is supposed never to have existed—and the record of an Imperial House is shrouded in the sentimental haze of a summer day long years ago.

But there is more in it than that. Kings make for the unity of a nation. They stand above the strife of factions, and they can afford to be generous to powerful minorities. There was no persecution of the Jews under the Kaiser, or of the

priests in France until the advent of a republic. Racial animosities have burnt with a far fiercer flame in the dismembered parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire than they did when it was one unit under the Emperor.

The old cry that monarchs and emperors mean war has lost much of its sting. It does not carry with it, at any rate, the corollary that democracies mean peace. Dictators indeed are far more likely to take risks. They have only their own skins to lose. There is no feeling in them for the safety of the Imperial House, which has been handed down to them in trust, and which they must pass on to their sons intact.

But, so far as Central Europe is concerned, it must be the return of the Austro-Hungarian Empire or nothing. As I wandered round Schönbrunn that Sunday, I realised, for the first time, that it was really impossible for the Hapsburgs to return unless the Hapsburg world returned too.

If there is a return of the kings, it must be a return on the grand scale. With them must come empires and flunkeydom, and, above all, a ruthless sense of service and responsibility. Kings must be built like Franz Josef. I saw his character in his bedroom—so plain and bare, with its hideous brown-spotted chintz, its wooden washstand, its camp-bed, its prayer-desk. Franz Josef, behind all the pomp and circumstance of his empire, lived always as if on active service. There was nothing vulgar about him. His habits were as simple as his faith.

Somehow I could not see a successor now. It would be a kingship stripped of four-fifths of its grandeur and all of its dignity. Up to then I had almost wanted the return of Otto. Now that I had seen Schönbrunn, I knew that in present circumstances it would not work. It would be like a village concert at the Covent Garden Opera House, and it would collapse in ignominy and derision.

## CHAPTER LVIII

### BLOOD-STAINED COATS IN VIENNA

**S**UDDENLY all references to a Royalist restoration were driven from the news columns by a new twist to the Austrian crisis. On the afternoon of October 3rd, just after lunch, I was writing in my hotel bedroom when the door broke open and a white-faced hall-porter burst in to tell me, "They have shot our Chancellor."

It was staggering news. I had grasped enough of the Austrian situation to realise that the independence of Austria hung on the thread of the little Chancellor's life. There was not another man in the country who could keep together that crazy coalition of Heimwehr and Christian Socials that barred the way to a Nazi triumph.

Staying only to hear that he was still alive, I leapt downstairs and into a taxi for Parliament House, to find out what had really happened. Chancellor Dollfuss had had a remarkable escape from assassination at the hands of a youthful ex-soldier, Rudolf Dertl, in the Parliament House. Two shots were fired. The first was aimed at the Chancellor's breast. But it ricocheted off a metal button on his waistcoat. When the shirt was undone, the bullet fell harmlessly to the ground. The second shot pierced the upper part of his right arm, but struck no bones and made only a flesh wound. He had been—as we journalists say—"rushed to hospital," where he had immediately received Vice-Chancellor Fey. His life was not in danger. Having got what seemed the essential facts, and having telephoned them to the *Star*—the evening edition of my paper—I set about getting the details.

The outrage had taken place in a corridor of the Parliament House. The Chancellor was attending a meeting of his party—the Christian Socials. There had been a long discussion whether the party should follow the lead of Prince



Stahremberg and disband, in view of the non-party State that is to emerge when the new Constitution is shaped. What a macabre scene for the films. While the politicians talked, the would-be assassin waited outside the door. He was a nondescript-looking young man. None of the officials took any notice of him. He was reasonably well dressed, and he said he had a letter for the Chancellor. There is free entry to the public in these corridors. I had myself been through them on visits to Ministers and no questions had been asked. At 2.15, no decision having been reached, the party meeting adjourned for lunch. The young man's opportunity had come. As the door opened and Dollfuss came out, he tried to present a letter to him.

The detective who was with the Chancellor intercepted it and pushed the young man aside, whereupon he retired a pace or two, whipped out his revolver, and fired two shots. It is extraordinary how assassins miss their aim. If a man is so determined on murder that he is prepared himself to court certain execution to achieve it, he might at least take the precaution of a little revolver practice. But they never do. They do not even appear to test the revolver. This one was of an old-fashioned pattern, ludicrously inaccurate, with rusty barrels.

Yet Rudolf Dertl was quite sane. He had been in the army up to May 1932. Indeed, he had only been expelled from it for his well-known Nazi sympathies. His young brother had been arrested the month before, trying to escape across the Bavarian frontier. His whole family was Nazi, and there was evidence that he was acting under the orders of a notorious Nazi organisation in Styria.

While Dertl was being put through the usual ter third degree process, Chancellor Dollfuss was bag with his wife and his two children. It is an : poverty of the new Vienna that there is no for the Chancellor. Dr. Dollfuss lives in a in a back street in the centre of Vienna. does not receive more than £1,200 a year.

As he lay there, the sympathy almost of\

came to him. The wires of every chancellery in Europe hummed with sympathetic telegrams. Even Berlin thought that some gesture ought to be made, and Baron Neurath, the Foreign Minister, sent a message, though nothing came from Hitler.

The Royalists saw their chance of strengthening their connection with Dollfuss. "The Empress and I," wrote the Archduke Otto, "whole-heartedly thank God that Austria's champion has been preserved to my country. Your blood was not shed in vain, but for the independence of our beloved Fatherland, because, with the help of God, this shameful deed will have strengthened Austria and its people in their determination to fulfil the nation's historic mission to which my ancestors dedicated their lives."

In Austria, every organisation—except, of course, the proscribed Nazis—paid their tribute. The street in which the Chancellor's flat was situated was choked for days afterwards with deputations of peasants from all over Austria. The Jews held a thanksgiving service. There was a march past of the Heimwehr and a speech from Major Fey, in which he said that what was needed was justice and not vengeance. The moderation of Fey was in itself a tribute to the position of Dollfuss. For he was Austria's man of iron. A very gallant soldier, he had won the Maria Teresa Medal in the war, which was awarded only to those who disobeyed orders and were proved to have been justified in the result. He had the soldier's fear and dislike and incomprehension of the Socialists. For weeks he had only been waiting for an excuse to put his ferrets down their holes. He could so easily take this opportunity of declaring the State in danger, proclaim martial law, and suppress the Vienna municipality.

But Dollfuss had him in control. Fey behaved with admirable restraint. I saw him a few days later, and found him in a most generous and accommodating mood. "Great Britain need have no fear," he told me, "that we are establishing a dictatorship on the Hitlerite model. This is only an interim Government. When the Nazi menace is over and order assumed, a new Constitution will be established.

In that Constitution the Government will welcome the co-operation of a Parliament elected on the democratic basis."

Dollfuss could have done anything in those days. I believe that if he had boldly decreed an election, defied the Heimwehr, issued a rallying-call to the democratic forces of the nation in the hour of Austria's need, the response would have been magnificent, and every argument of the Nazis that they were a majority would have collapsed.

But the opportunity was let slip. As Chancellor Dollfuss recovered, the memory of his attempted murder faded and the Heimwehr became more and more in control. The persecution of the Socialists increased ; the main prop of support was wantonly kicked away. Fey became all-powerful, and at the first opportunity, when Dollfuss was away in Hungary this February, he sprang at the Socialists' throat, and the bloodiest civil war that Europe has so far witnessed resulted.

But all this was in the womb of the future. For the time being Dollfuss's escape from death had yet again saved the peace of Europe.

I was reminded of how the grass in those regions flames up like tinder to a match when I visited, a few afternoons later, the artillery museum. There in the entrance-hall is a motor-car—a cumbrous, old-fashioned Benz, with the driver's seat perched up high above the radiator ; obviously a pre-war model. The hood had been wrenched away and the coachwork at the back was riddled with bullet-holes. With a shudder I realised that it was the car which had driven the Archduke Ferdinand to his death that fatal June morning in 1914, and, before five years were out, ten millions of the youth of Europe as well. I went up the grand staircase, and there in a glass case was an even more gruesome relic. It was the military tunic of the Archduke, a magnificent double-breasted affair with red and gold facings. The marks of blood were still on it, and the ragged cuts as the surgeons had desperately slashed at it to get at the wounds before it was too late.

Within six weeks all the great armies of Europe had been mobilising. Supposing Dertil's bullet had pierced Dollfuss

two inches nearer the heart, might not something of the same kind have happened again ? His death might have meant the triumph of the Nazis. That might have led to the immediate violation of Austria's independence. The Powers could not have tolerated it. The whole structure of post-war Europe would have been threatened. There would have been notes ; and, as the pace quickened, protests ; and then ultimatums ; and, if they all failed, the appeal to force which inevitably must be the last resort in all human relationships.

Truly the world does not change. The assassination of a Hapsburg in 1914—the assassination of a four-foot-eleven Chancellor in 1933—the consequences might have been just the same. The background may alter. The one meets the assassin in all the trappings of military grandeur and the other in the drab uniform of a politician. The consequences do not alter. In putting off the glamour of war we have not put off the risks of war. Mass murder in gas-masks has no more taught mankind its folly than did the thrilling surge and swell of the cavalry charge. Perhaps that is the greatest tragedy of all.

## CHAPTER LIX

### VIENNA, FRONTIER OF ASIA

**T**HE GERMAN NAZIS still believe that it is only a question of months when the ramparts of the Dollfuss Government will have collapsed and the Austrian legion will be able to swarm across the frontier to the capture of Vienna itself. All plans are ready for the complete assimilation of Austria into the German Reich. In the Government departments of Berlin it is already regarded as a German province.

They do not realise the intractable material the average Austrian is for national absorption. He speaks German, but that is one of the few affinities he has with Germany. He is inconsequent, lazy, charming, unmilitary, and possessed of a strong sense of the ludicrous—all attributes that the Nazis most dislike.

Particularly is this true of Vienna, which contains a third of the whole population of Austria. It was at the gates of Vienna that the Turks, in their terrifying sweep across Europe, were at last halted and thrust back. The two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Vienna's deliverance was celebrated last September with a fusillade of patriotic speeches. But, though the Eastern hordes were driven back, they left upon Vienna an influence that centuries have not eradicated. Vienna, though it is only a day's journey from Paris, is in many ways the frontier of Asia.

I felt it when, a few minutes after the shots had been fired at Dr. Dollfuss, I went round to the Parliament House to get the scene in my mind. I was innocently looking up at the building from the other side of the road when the police tried to hustle me on. Yet for two hours they had let a young man with a pistol in his pocket stand outside a room in the centre of Parliament House out of which they would know sooner or later the Chancellor would emerge. It was as if the police in England had allowed an unknown young man to

remain for two hours outside the Prime Minister's room during an important conference in the House of Commons.

There is the same sleepy stupidity on the part of the taxi-drivers, so reminiscent of India. It is several minutes before they begin to understand where one wants to go. "Praterstrasse," you say, repeating the name of a well-known Viennese street with something approaching a German accent. It strikes no spark. Not a glimmer of understanding lights up the driver's face. He goes up to the cab rank to consult his colleagues. Soon there is quite a crowd of them chanting "Praterstrasse" in varying tones of incomprehension. Then one of them has an inspiration. "Prater Strasse," he says, in precisely the same tones as you have employed twenty times. The car is wound up, the drive begins, and a few minutes later you are deposited at the Baker Strasse. I have suffered it all before, from Colombo to the Khyber. I am told that it is unreasonable of me to expect a taxi-driver to understand the names of streets when pronounced in a foreign tongue, and that foreigners in England suffer from exactly the same difficulties in giving directions. I do not believe it. Indeed I tested it the other day. Adopting a creditable imitation of broken English, I wandered up and down Victoria Street asking the way to "Pikeadillee." I received directions that were both accurate and explicit.

There is in Vienna an exasperating lack of punctuality so typical of Eastern peoples. Even the celebrations in connection with the Catholic Congress began forty-five minutes late.

One hot autumn night I gobbled down my dinner in order to be in time for the first night of a new film. It was to be a gala performance attended by Vice-Chancellor Fey. It was to begin at 9 p.m. I arrived to the minute, to find the cinema a quarter full. Slowly the audience drifted in, and the film finally started at 9.35 p.m.

This unpunctuality extends to social relations. An Austrian lunch-party will be timed for 1.15, and by two o'clock the last guest will be arriving.

There is the afternoon siesta of the East—with not a tenth

of the excuse in point of heat. Business comes to a standstill between 12.30 and 3 p.m. Some Government offices do not reopen in the afternoon at all.

Even in the so-called Republican Austria the caste system among the nobility survives from the Empire, when a Court ball was open only to the families with the right quota of quarterings. To meet them is to visit a lost world.

Though some, in desperation, have had to take to earning their own livings, many of them would still rather endure real poverty on the pittance of their Army pensions than "enter trade." They mourn the triumph of "the Radicals" in England, and they sympathise with King George at having to receive at Buckingham Palace that "dreadful Mr. Thomas." I tried to explain to one of them that "the dreadful Mr. Thomas" was a great personal friend of the King, and that he provided him with a never-failing supply of the latest after-dinner stories. But it was in vain. Mr. Thomas had been an engine-driver and a Socialist, and there could be nothing good in him. The Socialists are still untouchables. If the Court ever returns in triumph to Schönbrunn, it will be found that "it has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing."

But this innate Conservatism extends to all ranks of society. It takes one very pleasant form. Old institutions are protected by law. This embraces not merely ancient buildings with obvious historical interest, like churches and palaces, but places of quite recent date provided that they have some claim to be a period piece. Thus the Café Centrale is preserved, in all its mid-Victorian splendour of pillars and plush, because it was the meeting-place of the Radicals of the 'eighties. If such a law existed in London, St. James's Music Hall would yet be with us, and Nash's Quadrant and the Aquarium, and Adelphi Terrace would not be doomed.

Except in India, I know no city more easy to re-people with the past than Vienna. Turn down any of the old streets at night, with their eighteenth-century buildings untouched by time, and faintly down the wind comes the echo of Maria Teresa's coach once more rattling over the

cobble-stones. It is still possible, indeed, to hire a two-horse cab.

Then there is the café life so delightfully reminiscent of the tranquil chatter of the bazaar. In Vienna, where there are no clubs—or only the Jockey Club for the nobility—all social life eddies round the cafés. Not that they are cheap. A cup of coffee costs the equivalent of eightpence in English money.

But for that it is possible to gossip all day, and read the leading papers of the world, from the *Paris Soir* to the *Moscow Pravda*. What is more, it is a second address. If a man is not at home, or at his office, he will be at his favourite café.

Half the work of Vienna—business, political, or nefarious—is transacted there. The bank directors will break off a conversation to take one off for black coffee. The Christian Socials, the Socialists, and the illegal Nazis all have their recognised cafés. Assassinations are plotted there.

In the Café Imperial, for instance, the head waiter will proudly show you the table where the murderers of King Alexander of Serbia laid their plans ; and it was from the Café Centrale that the pacifist Dr. Adler went out to fire the fatal bullet at Count Sturgkh, the Austrian Chancellor, in the height of the war, as he sat at lunch in the Meissl Schadn Hotel, one winter Sunday afternoon in 1917. Most Eastern of all is the complicated, almost tortuous, mentality of the average Austrian politician. Listen to the way a supporter of the Government will explain why there is no Parliament. It is not that Dr. Dullfuss has suppressed it. What happened was this : a vote in a division in the Chamber was disallowed on some technical point. Uproar resulted. The Socialist President resigned. A member of the next largest party—the Christian Socials—was appointed to take his place. The uproar continued, and the Christian Social resigned. A member of the third largest party—the Pan-German Party—then succeeded to the chair. By that time Parliament was in a pandemonium. The Pan-German President resigned, and the House broke up in wild disorder without



anybody else being appointed. But the President of the Chamber can alone summon Parliament. There being no President, Parliament is permanently suspended. "So you see"—the Government politician turns to me in triumph—"it is not Chancellor Dollfuss's doing that Parliament is shut up."

A Hindu Congressman could hardly produce a subtler chain of reasoning than that. Almost, those sunny autumn afternoons, I believed myself back on Mr. Gandhi's verandah in the glare of Imperial Delhi.

Even the Heimwehr, the much-vaunted Fascist storm troops of the romantic Prince Stahremberg, remind me faintly of Abdul Gaffur Khan's Redshirts on the frontier in the height of the Civil Disobedience campaign in India. I saw a parade of them, in Vienna, on the night the attempt was made on the life of Chancellor Dollfuss. They would have given an English sergeant-major apoplexy. They straggled by—some in outsize uniforms, others without uniforms at all—out of step, chattering to their neighbours. They might have been off to an annual picnic instead of to a ceremonial march past their leader Major Fey, Austria's man of iron, in the crisis of their country's fate. I must add that since then they have with considerable efficiency succeeded in turning the Vienna streets into a creditable imitation of a Chicago slaughter-house. But from a military point of view they were an arresting contrast to the Nazi forces I had seen a few weeks before in Germany—with the zest for smartness and a joy in discipline of a Brigade of Guards. That march past told me, more than a dozen speeches and articles could have done, that Austria and Germany, so far as their outlook is concerned, are in different hemispheres, and the attempt forcibly to unite them can only end—if successful—in humiliation and misery for Austria.

## CHAPTER LX

### WHERE SLUMS HAVE BEEN CLEARED

"THE IMMENSE Karl Marx Hof has been captured after a fight lasting from dawn till midday . . . its five thousand occupants have been evacuated and the building is slowly filling with gas . . . from Ottakring comes the rattle of machine-gun fire and the occasional thud of a howitzer. . . ." So read the sober, accurate report of *The Times* on the riots in February 1934. I rubbed my eyes. Was this really the quarter that only a few months before, one sunny October afternoon, I had visited with another fellow Liberal M.P., Mr. Geoffrey Mander, as the finest illustration of slum clearance in Europe?

We had made our tour on the invitation of Herr Seitz, the Socialist Burgomaster of Vienna, an old man with a beard, very courteous and charming, in appearance and manner rather like Lord D'Abernon. Hastily I ran my eye down the two-column account. What had happened to him? "Herr Seitz," I read, "the deposed Socialist Burgomaster, who has long been in poor health, suffered a stroke to-day at the Police Presidency in consequence of the strain to which he has been subjected. He is reported to be in a state of collapse."

What had happened to those kindly women who had taken me in and shown me those lovely flats? ". . . roughly made deal coffins carried through an outlying street. It is believed that many women and children have shared the fate of their menfolk."

So this was the end of the great adventure in social reform. The place of pilgrimage for the housing reformers of the world had become a shambles. Almost the solitary great achievement of post-war Socialism was in ruins.

But, though the experiment is over, it is worth, even now, some description.

This city of two million people crippled by the war and the Peace Treaty, where the average earnings of the working man do not exceed thirty shillings a week, has in ten years cleared away its slums. It was a fascinating tour that I made to find out how it had been done. Our first stopping-place was inevitably some way from the centre of the town, and I recalled one of the major problems of housing in England—the increased expense in travelling to and from work involved in distant housing estates. It has been overcome here in an interesting way. The fare on the trams—thirty-two groschen ; about twopence—is a flat rate.

It is thus possible to go from one end of Vienna to the other for the same price as for a few hundred yards down the street.

My first sight was of the Karl Marx Hof, a series of working men's flats stretching block after block for a thousand yards. It contained fourteen hundred flats. It sounds a dreary vista, but they were not the skyscraper slums that frequently go under the name of working men's dwellings in England.

They were fronted by a green line of grass playgrounds for the children ; each flat had a balcony decked out as a flower-garden, each block had some subtle change in line or colour that was extraordinarily restful to the eye. There were statues and fountains such as in London are found only in some smart West End " court."

My guide knocked at a door at random, and we asked permission to go inside. It was like the advertisement of a model dwelling in a garden suburb. There was an entrance-hall, a kitchen, two rooms, and a balcony so big that it made a fine nursery. All the flooring was parquet, and with each flat was included a gas stove.

With the memory of back yards at home, with the washing hanging out to dry on a Monday afternoon, I asked how in a flat that difficulty was overcome. It was quite simple. There was a steam laundry. The right to use it was included in the rent. And the rent for all this—which included a gas stove and a steam laundry ? The equivalent of five English shillings a week.

And in my constituency—and in five hundred others—unemployed families, with not more than twenty-eight shillings a week coming into the house, are paying twelve and sixpence to fourteen shillings a week.

I know what the average Englishman interested in housing will say : “ That is all very well. These are flats. The English working man will not live in flats, and if you had to tramp up ten flights of stairs every time you came back from an afternoon’s shopping, you wouldn’t either.” I agree. I said exactly the same to my guide.

His answer was to take me to another part of Vienna, where I saw an estate, not of flats, but of houses—blocks of four or eight houses, each with a separate door and a staircase. We explored further, and came upon another estate of two-storied houses exactly as in England. They were as well equipped and as comfortable and as cheap as the flats.

It was all according to taste. Some preferred communal living ; others liked the isolation of a separate house. I cannot believe that it was a mere accident that the communal flats were called the Karl Marx Hof and the estates of separate houses were named after George Washington.

How has it been done ? Here are the facts. During the war there was a severe Rent Restriction Act. This continued after the war into the time of the inflation. Private enterprise found it hopelessly unprofitable to build new houses. The shortage was appalling. The municipality had to step in and build its own. There was no money for it in the city treasury, and little possibility of raising a loan. It had to be done out of special taxation. A tax was levied on each room in any occupied house rising by arithmetical progression after each third room. Thus, if you paid four pounds for four rooms you were taxed sixteen pounds for five rooms and thirty-two pounds for six rooms. It was a crushing impost, but it produced the money and the houses.

Sixty thousand houses have been built since 1922 in Vienna, and they are free of all charges in connection with

debt and sinking fund. The rent is not rent in our sense—the payment of interest on capital. It is merely a charge for present upkeep and future repairs.

No doubt weighty objections can be brought against the measures. It will be argued that the British nation, with an income tax of five shillings in the pound, could not afford the terrible burden of additional taxation ; that money must earn three and a half per cent ; and that the fact that the loan is for housing makes no difference, and that in any case the present position of Austria's finances is hardly an advertisement of the soundness of her financial policy since the war.

But the results cannot be argued away. While we in England have been talking about the slum clearance—producing successive Housing Bills, launching “ crusades,” conducting “ drives ”—Vienna has done it.

The popularity of it was beyond dispute. Though Vienna had long since gone anti-Socialist in national affairs, in municipal affairs the city still returned the Socialist Party which first launched the Housing Scheme by a majority, after twelve years, of two-thirds of the seats.

But there was nothing particularly Socialistic about the achievement. As the Socialist Burgomaster said to me, “ It is the Socialists who happen to have done it here, but the same kind of thing could be done in England by any party.”

But will it be done ? Slum clearance needs ruthlessness and it needs self-sacrifice. There is not a plentiful supply of these qualities to-day, either in the Ministry of Health or the property-owners. There is also the remarkable Conservatism of the working classes. I talked to the members of the English trade-union delegation to Vienna about the Vienna housing. They were quite unimpressed by it. “ Well, I don't like that steam laundry idea at all,” one of them said to me. “ My wife would not like to go out and do her washing at a stated time. And those baths, too—fancy having to dress first, and then go across a cold courtyard and have a bath, and then have to dress all over again ! ” Another objection to the

payment for these houses out of taxation was : “ If houses are provided by the State, why not food and clothing ? ”

Still, the fact remains that Vienna is the only city in Europe that has cleared its slums—or, rather, had cleared its slums. For after the events of February even post-war Vienna has become a city in the past tense.

## CHAPTER LXI

### NAZISM SPREADS EASTWARDS

THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION of Dollfuss was succeeded by a sudden calm in Austrian politics. The general movement towards him seemed more than temporary, and for the time being he clearly had a larger following than he had ever had before. Nazis, both in Austria and outside, realised that it was an occasion for caution, and stayed their hand until a more convenient season.

I gave the all-clear signal in my newspaper office, and received leave to proceed on my way. Intending to stay only a few days in Vienna, I had remained four weeks. My plans had been wrecked. I had hoped to go to Hungary with a group of fellow members, as the guests of the Revisionists in Buda Pesth. But I had watched the party come through Vienna, and return through it on the way home.

I did not feel that I could face Buda Pesth alone, and, indeed, I had already heard so much about Hungarian problems from the members of the party as they trickled back through Vienna that it was already rather stale.

In any case, temporarily I had had enough of the German-speaking peoples. I had eaten and drunk the Nazi problem, from *café complet* to the last *schnitzel*, almost uninterruptedly since June, and I wanted to get away from it. So I struck out for Rumania. It was a strange, rather frightening journey past stations with no platforms and, when the night came, police guards with lanterns. The last flax-field of the interminable Central European plain had slid past the carriage window, and I was in the land of bullock-carts, and drivers with Cossack caps, and towering forest-covered mountains. It was Transylvania, and I shivered in my corner seat. For was not Transylvania the *mise en scène* of *Dracula*?—the book that had gripped me, as a child, with the fascination of repulsion.

But I did not escape the Nazis. As my train panted up the

tree-clad passes of the Carpathians I fancied I heard, at a wild wayside station, two young men greet one another with the cry, "*Heil, Hitler!*"

Arrived in Rumania, I made it my first task to investigate the Nazi problem. I found out that there was indeed a Hitler movement in Rumania, and that it was growing in numbers and influence. There are in actual fact three Nazi parties in Rumania. There is the Rumanian Christian League, under Professor Cuza; there are the Iron Guards, under Mr. Cornelin Codreanu, an ardent young man of thirty; and there is the National Socialist Party, under Colonel Tatarescu.

In the 1931 election their combined vote was two hundred thousand. But that was before Herr Hitler came into power. Since then have come the Nazi agents, and with them, as in Austria, have arrived extensive subsidies.

I heard, for instance, of a certain newspaper in Chernovitz, which a year ago had a small and unimportant circulation, which has now blossomed out with new linotype machines and all the equipment necessary to a national newspaper. It is published in the German-speaking part of Transylvania that up to the Peace Treaty was within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the policy of the newspaper is avowedly Nazi.

A great Nazi barracks is nearing completion on the outskirts of Bucharest.

There is the inevitable movement for union of the three parties, and it can only be a matter of time when they are absorbed under one dominant personality. More serious than their present size are the sources from which the Rumanian Nazis draw their strength. They are almost identical with those in Germany.

The main driving force is anti-Semitism. Out of the population of seventeen millions, eight hundred thousand are Jews. Such a large proportion presents an obvious target. I am hearing exactly the same tirade against the Jews as I heard in Germany last year, on the eve of Hitler's triumph. They are all in the best jobs; they have a virtual monopoly



of the Bucharest Bar ; they are supreme in the entertainment world.

A great number of them were alleged to be refugees from Russia, just as in Germany they insisted that there had been a great influx from Poland. Like the Jews from Poland, they were stated to be a particularly unpleasant type. "Of course, quite different to the Jews you have in England." How many times did I hear that last autumn !

Then there is the same half-ashamed qualification of all this. "It is not the Jews," my informant tells me, "who were in the old kingdom of Rumania who are the difficulty. It is the Jews who came in from Poland and Russia, and have settled in Moldavia and Wallachia. They disguise poppy-seed and sell it as silkworm, and buy up the estates of farmers, ruined by the war, at bargain prices."

I have heard it all before in Germany—only, then, it was the Jews from Galicia, and their particular crime was profiting out of the inflation.

There is the same exploitation of the sins of the politicians. Here, unfortunately, they appear to be on fairly safe ground. Every Rumanian admits that politics are soaked in corruption. There is tax evasion on the large scale. A great many of the politicians and Civil Servants can be bribed. In contrast with these crafty and venal politicians the Nazis are able to pose as knights in shining armour.

Then there is all the appeal of the smart uniform and the discipline. Though there is conscription in Rumania, it does not appear to satisfy this desire. One reason is that, owing to lack of money, a substantial proportion of young men are never called up. It is also the fact that the life of a conscript has few attractions for them. The uniform is drab, and the conditions arduous. University students enjoy the privilege of having their period of training postponed and shortened. The authorities can always check undue boisterousness on the part of the Nazi students by threatening to put them in the army immediately. What these boys want is not to be soldiers but to play at soldiers.

Unemployment plays the inevitable part. With the war

came an enormous influx into the universities. They all aim at Civil Service jobs, and there are not enough to go round.

The Nazis are breaking into violence exactly as they did in Italy, in Germany, and in Austria. A month after I had left, shots rang out in the railway station of Sinaia, and, a few minutes later, the Prime Minister, M. Duca, was dying in King Carol's arms. The assailant was a member of the Iron Front. When I visit Rumania again, I shall not be surprised to find him a martyr, his photograph draped in black, another Horst Wessel or Schlageter. Is it all to repeat itself in Rumania? Will the Nazis create the civil war, and then come in as the only party who can crush it?

But for us outside Rumania the most alarming feature of this movement is that its foreign policy is pan-German. It is strongest among the German-speaking peoples of Transylvania that were, up to 1918, within the empire of the Hapsburgs. But they were not happy then under Hungarian oppressions, and they regard themselves now, not as Austro-Hungarian *irredenta*, but as German *irredenta*. They are being taught by the secret Nazi agents to look to Hitler for deliverance, just as are the Germans in Austria, in Switzerland, in Hungary, in Poland, in Denmark, and Czechoslovakia.

It is all part of the gigantic plan to create a Germany that will stretch from the North Sea to the Black Sea.

As yet Rumania has not grasped the Nazi menace. Uniforms are tolerated; there is a law against the use of swastikas, but it is not enforced. The other parties in Germany are trying to steal the Nazi thunder. There is a move, for instance, in Parliament to limit by statute the number of Jews allowed to practise in the law courts.

I believe that conciliation as regards the Fascists is merely mocked at as weakness. Bruening knows that. So does von Papen. The reprieve of the Beuthen murderers only accelerated the pace at which the Nazi movement grew. Democratic government, if it is to defend itself, must answer the threat of dictatorship with swift and smashing force while yet it has the power.

## CHAPTER LXII

### THE CASE FOR CAROL

**T**HEN THERE IS KING CAROL. He knows what position Royal Families occupy in the Fascist State. Though he is a Hohenzollern—perhaps because he is a Hohenzollern—he realises the danger of this new “*Drang nach Osten*”—this dream of a drive to the east which brought the Kaiser to Doorn—and he is determined to do everything in his power to stop it.

I was impressed by a good deal of what I heard and saw of King Carol. He is right manfully struggling against a mountain of inefficiency.

The condition of the army when he took over was appalling. It was months in arrears of pay. It was shockingly ill clothed—the uniforms were ragged and the boots were without soles—and the officers were often corrupt and effeminate. He has put his army into khaki—in imitation of England, which he much admires. There is nothing musical comedy about the discipline now. The Rumanian manoeuvres were taking place at the time when I was there. From 6 a.m. to late at night they marched, on a mug of coffee and a hunk of bread. On manoeuvres in England, “the war” stops for the midday meal. Rumanian officers were virile and efficient. There is no basis nowadays for the legend that a powder-puff forms part of their ordinary equipment, and that an army order had to be produced to forbid it.

The Exchequer was in a permanent state of insolvency. Money levied in taxation found its way into the party funds of the party that levied it. The King did rid himself of the party most prominently associated with this deplorable condition of affairs. In the choosing of his Governments he has considerable power. He can make and unmake Ministries, and his decisions are not likely to be upset by electors, for by an ingenious working of the system of proportional

representation the party with forty per cent of the votes automatically gets sixty per cent of the seats. I heard little complaint that the King had misused this power. There was still corruption. What can be expected in a country that pays its leading Ministers little more than fifty pounds a month? But it was recognised that the King was vehemently opposed to it, and was doing his best to root it out.

He has worked with great energy and resolution for a better understanding between Rumania and the surrounding countries. "Who are Rumania's neighbours?" asked Queen Marie, when visiting a school a few years ago. "Her enemies," was the prompt reply. It was true up to a few months ago. Rumania was surrounded by a ring of concentrated hatred. It was inevitable in a country that, as a result of the war, which she did not enter until 1916, is now two-thirds larger than she was before 1914.

For Bulgaria there is the running sore of the Dobrudja, which, though it was annexed by Rumania, is Bulgarian in population and sympathy. There is Transylvania, that was sliced from Hungary with little consideration of its ethnology and history. Hungary vows that she will never accept the arrangement as a permanent settlement. She is confirmed in her intransigence by the conviction that one Hungarian is worth three Rumanians. Even more productive of enmity is the Russian frontier, where a vast tract of rich corn-growing country was ceded to Rumania.

Patiently, with the aid of the indefatigable M. Titulesco, the King has set himself to improve the relations. A non-aggression pact was made with Russia. Generosity was the keynote of the Government policy in Transylvania. Hungarians were given freedom to attend their own schools and maintain their own language. They had complete freedom of the Press, and there are actually now more Hungarian newspapers than when it was part of Hungary.

Friendships outside have been strengthened. This summer, King Carol played host to the Little Entente at Sinaia. I visited the gorgeous spot where he had entertained five hundred to lunch a few days before, high up in the mountains, flanked

by trees turning an autumn red, as they do in the fall in New England. It was a sheep pasture. I could not imagine a better place for a Peace Conference.

The Sinaia meeting certainly seems to have been more successful than most of these post-war gatherings. Plans were laid for the strengthening of the political *entente* by an economic *entente*. Into this were to be invited the defeated States, Hungary and Bulgaria. They subsequently refused, but it was something that these Kings and Foreign Ministers realised that the way of peace lay in their inclusion.

In all this the King played a constructive and creditable part. He is not particularly popular. They do not cheer him in the streets. But he has the Hohenzollern virtues of industry and probity.

On the whole, I think that King Carol has an unfair Press in this country. He has an unfortunate matrimonial record, but so have many others. The impression here of a brutal husband driving away his wife from Court, flaunting his mistress in the eyes of all, ill treating his mother, and keeping his wife from all share of the society of their son Michael, is really not borne out by the facts. There is at any rate another side to it.

Princess Helen deliberately chose the road of divorce when the row might have been patched up. She sided with the King's enemies and was instrumental in his exile from Rumania. It was only when he returned in triumph and overturned the Regency that she made any gesture of reconciliation—and it was then obviously too late. There is certainly no very strong feeling of sympathy for Princess Helen in Rumania. They say that she took the opportunity of instituting divorce proceedings when he was down, and only returned to Bucharest to extort a more favourable settlement.

It is hardly surprising that he finds it difficult to be cordial with his mother. Queen Marie did not withhold her approval of the Government that was formed during his exile. He could not even find asylum in England. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the case, it was a bitter humiliation for the great-grandson of Queen Victoria. As a matter

of fact, the relations between Queen Marie and her son are quite correct. She still has her house within a few hundred yards of Sinaia, and on all State occasions she is given due place and honour.

King Carol is devoted to Prince Michael—now rather fat and, though only fourteen, allowed to drive enormous American cars. The King puts no obstacle in the way of Michael visiting his mother at agreed intervals.

There is no flaunting of his mistress. The red-haired Madame Lupescu never appears with the King in public. I did not meet a single person in Rumania who had ever seen them together. She has a little house in Bucharest and Sinaia, and lives in complete retirement, taking no interest in politics. The idea that she is the sinister power behind the throne is just Rumanian Fascist propaganda. The only influence that she may have exercised, being a Jew herself, is in the direction of influencing the King against the Fascists. There is no strong feeling in Rumania as a whole about Madame Lupescu. The average Rumanian shrugs his shoulders and passes on.

So far as the King's advisers are concerned, it is natural that he should choose them from amongst those who were faithful to him in his exile. He had a terrible time. There was nothing from which his enemies would have shrunk to have got him out of the way. His present secretary used to lie in front of his door, when he was a fugitive in France, to prevent assassination, and every morsel of food had to be tasted owing to the risks of poisoning.

For the rest, King Carol, when I met him in Bucharest, seemed to me an amiable, rather lonely young man. He is a typical Hohenzollern in the enjoyment of ceremonial, and, since he is the only member of the Royal Family available for State functions, he has plenty of it. He plays golf, shoots, and is keen on bridge. Beyond that, his only amusement is work.

"Carol the Cad," shrieked the headlines of a great London newspaper a year or two ago. It stung like a whip. The doors of Buckingham Palace are closed to the King of

Rumania. It is a humiliating position. Is it deserved? King Carol may have many unamiable qualities, but so have many other prominent men whom the English newspapers show no marked reluctance to honour.

King Carol is trying, however imperfectly, to lift his country out of the slough, and, after all, Rumania is now almost as large as France. Incidentally, it had to bear the full force of the German-Austrian attack when the Russian front collapsed, and it was able to preserve some kind of defence when everything else had gone. It is well for us not to be sanctimonious about the private life of their King. We may need their help again one day.

## CHAPTER LXIII

### BALKAN VILLAGE

A FEW DAYS after my arrival in Rumania, I casually remarked to a distinguished Rumanian that "I was so much enjoying my visit to the Balkans." There was a pained silence. It was obviously something that one just did not say. I was told of the President of the Geographical Society who, as the honoured guest at a State banquet in the years before the war, had referred, in the course of a flowing oration, to the aged King Carol as "the Nestor of the Balkans." There was a storm in Bucharest. King Carol reminded him that the Balkans are a range of mountains that do not touch Rumania.

It was like the unfortunate Governor of New South Wales a generation ago, who, on his way out, wired from Perth to the city fathers at Sydney the quotation from Kipling, "Your birth-stains you have turned to good account." The ceremonies of welcome had almost to be abandoned in consequence. Rumanians have as little relish for remarks about the Balkans as have Australians for references, however oblique, to their convict origins.

Nor in some respects is Rumania a Balkan country in the accepted sense of the term. Assassination is not a recognised political weapon. The murder of the Prime Minister was almost the first political crime this century. There is little love of war as such. Rumania kept out of the first Balkan war altogether, and in the second war only appeared on the scene to complete the downfall of Bulgaria, which she secured almost the moment her troops crossed the frontier.

But there are sights and sounds in Rumania that to the traveller are delightfully reminiscent of all he has read of Balkan countries. There is that bewildering juxtaposition of smartness and sloppiness.

I came across it outside the Palace in Bucharest. There stand the sentinels of the Royal Guard in their resplendent



blue tunics and striped grey trousers. They might have stepped out of a production at Daly's. But the drive they guard is a mass of builder's rubble. It was the same at the Palace at Sinaia. Ornate gates open the way to an impressive drive leading up to a vast monstrosity, a cross between a Swiss chalet and a Scottish baronial castle. There are pedestals for statues and no statues on them; and great lawns, but uncut, and with a farmyard of hens pecking their way slowly across them. It is all a slightly ramshackle grandeur.

To my delight I found that even in Bucharest the horse competed almost on equal terms with the motor-car. It is still possible to be rattled along the narrow cobbled streets in *birjas*—two-horsed victorias. The horses are magnificent—high-steppers and beautifully groomed. They are driven by a special sect—Lipovan refugees from the Russia of Peter the Great. Objecting to certain translations of the Gospels, they fled to Rumania. They adopted there the professions of cab-driving and fishing. They are extraordinarily picturesque in their long flowing coats, their red sashes, and their Cossack hats.

Modern Bucharest has about it the appearance of a temporary structure. There are fine shops and grand boulevards, but they tend to give the impression that they are out of their context—that they have just been run up for a few months, like an exhibition. Bucharest is faintly reminiscent of the White City in the days of its decline. There is a feeling that Bucharest's apparent grandeur is lath and plaster, that it is crumbling away, and that soon it will return to the Balkan village that it was fifty years ago.

I visited a *cabaret* show one evening. It was a good entertainment, as good as anything that Vienna or Paris could provide. But I had to walk down half-made drains, and cross duck-boards, and dodge under scaffolding in order to reach it. It seemed symbolic of the capital. On a primitive peasant people is constructed a rather shoddy façade of French civilisation.

All the upper classes speak French as if it were their

native language. There are French manners and French clothes, and French theatres and French literature. The picture in England of Queen Marie as the homesick queen sighing for the way of living of her childhood is quite untrue. She has encouraged these French influences. The main streets of Bucharest might be those of a provincial town. But the French civilisation is self-conscious and not rooted.

Turn aside into the by-ways, and one is out of Europe altogether. Here are a multitude of tongues—Russian, Turkish, Rumanian, Greek, Bulgarian. Here are swarming crowds such as I have never seen outside an Indian bazaar. Here, too, is that authentic smack of the East—the half-naked beggar and the strong smell of drains.

I was brought right up against that bewildering contrast of swagger and squalor that is the hallmark of the East when I visited the gypsy quarter. Its filth is indescribable—one-roomed hovels without floor-boards, or glass in the windows, or sinks. Women sat in the gutters outside—bundles of rags as immobile and blissful as cows ; an open drain ran down the middle of the road, and a heaving mass of children wallowed in the dirt. As I splashed my way out of it, I met three smart young men, in black coats and striped trousers, entering it. Vaguely I remembered them. Where had I seen them before ? Then it dawned on me. They were the young men who had played that haunting gypsy music at the *cabaret* the night before. Clearly they were returning following on an afternoon's engagement. But, though they were earning, presumably, good money, they preferred this squalor. At heart they were peasants. Their sophistication was just a sham.

The Near East has not changed. I recalled these incidents when, that evening, I talked with some of the leading politicians on peace and war. Revision was discussed, and I told them how implacable was the feeling in Hungary that there could not be a lasting settlement without a restoration of at any rate a part of the lost Transylvania.

"Then it means war," they said. "No Government here could consent to revision. The peasants would not stand for

it. They know the frontier ; they know that pole across the road that divides one country from another. Move that pole five miles into what is now Rumanian territory, and it is war." From what I saw, I believe that to be true. Civilisation in Rumania is just a veneer. Behind it are the old stubborn hatreds and fears of a peasant people devoted to the land and determined to hold on to what they have got.

Hungary would do well to be cautious. Rumania may be corrupt and her army ill-equipped, but she is a large country, and in the peasants there is a primitive patriotism that it might be dangerous to arouse.

As I drove to the station there was a hostile crowd down a side street, and faintly I heard what sounded like the smashing of glass. I asked what it was. I was told that it was the Bulgarian Legation. There had been frontier incidents—a raid by *Comitadjis*, and the murder of a couple of Rumanian peasants. This demonstration was the response. This corner of the world was back in the pre-war epoch. Perhaps it had never left it. I know that the great railway station, recently constructed in steel and glass with post-war efficiency, seemed that night curiously unreal.

## CHAPTER LXIV

### A RICKETY REPUBLIC

**W**HILE I was in Rumania, Germany left the League of Nations, and a few hours later I had a wire from my paper asking me to try and get an interview with Dr. Beneš, the Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia. So once more I changed my plans ; abandoned a flight into Bulgaria and set off on the forty-eight-hour journey back to Prague. It was the measure of the situation that the Balkans were no longer " news." What did a frontier scrap on the Bulgar-Rumanian frontier matter when perhaps in a few months all that was best in European civilisation might be at one another's throats ?

As the train lumbered through the dreary flax-fields I sensed what the average young man must have felt in 1914 who had gone on a trip to the Balkans to see what the old hatreds and national fears were really like and then had discovered that all Europe was arming behind him. What an incredible mess the statesmen had made of international relationships ! Every station I passed was swarming with soldiers. Squadrons of aeroplanes in military formation were flying overhead. They were a detachment of the Polish air force returning home. The day before, I had watched with King Carol a display by them on the aerodrome at Bucharest. I glanced idly at the squalid little villages as they glided past the carriage window. There were little peasant boys with wooden models of aeroplanes. I recalled with what delight a Rumanian airman had told me that his country was becoming air-minded. More troops, more guns, more fiendish methods of destruction, more tariffs and obstacles to human intercourse than in the war to end war and establish the reign of brotherly love.

Even as my thoughts ran in these commonplace grooves a trade barrier appeared in person. It was a uniformed gentleman asking me how much money I was taking out of

the country. I told him. It was not a true figure. I had five times as much as I had disclosed concealed about my person. But he did not make any search. He was off on another track altogether. How had I obtained the money? "A letter of credit," I innocently answered. The hunt was fairly up then. The letter of credit was not noted on the passport. Why not? Where was my certificate from the Governor of the National Bank? I did not know. I had not got one. More officials were fetched. The stationmaster joined in; so did all the other passengers in the coach. In and out they came, shutting and opening note-books, voluble, gesticulating, angry. It was like a wasps' nest. Then suddenly everyone became bored with it all. One by one they strolled away. The stationmaster blew his whistle and the train lurched and grunted off into Slovakia. Feeling like an international crook, I extracted the remainder of my notes from my boots. Yet all I had been doing in reality was exchanging good sterling for doubtful Rumanian paper—the one transaction which could make it less doubtful.

The next day I got my first "close-up" of Czechoslovakia.

I could not have visited a country more dangerously combustible as the result of the Peace Treaty. It is a microcosm of all the fissiparous elements in the old Hungarian Empire. There are five different nationalities within its borders—Czechs, Hungarians, Ruthenes, Germans, Slovaks. The Germans are in the position once held by the Austrians. They are the rulers. What is more, having been under the control of a foreign element for centuries, they know how to keep foreign elements under control. Prague is a Vienna in a Austro-Hungarian Empire in miniature.

The main sufferers are the Slovaks. At the Pittsburg convention which came in the wake of President Masaryk's tour of the Allied countries in the war they were promised autonomy. It was one of the conditions on which the new State of Czechoslovakia was to be carved out of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Of this autonomy, sixteen years afterwards the Slovaks are not yet in sight of achievement.

This union of the Slovaks with the Czechs is in origin very artificial. I saw something of them when I came through Slovakia—men with clerical black hats and slow eyes, looking as if they had stepped out of Chekov as they herded into third-class carriages on their interminable visits to their relations. There could be no greater contrast to the sharp-featured, bullet-headed, brisk, rather boorish Czech.

The Czechs are in complete control of the Slovaks. They refuse not merely autonomy, but an elementary measure of political liberty. Slovak papers are suppressed. Free speech is prohibited. Only Czech officials—and the worst type too—are given appointments. Slovakia is indeed a dumping-ground of any official under a cloud. Slovak industries are penalised so that they should not compete with the Czechs. There is, of course, another side. I was fortunate enough to be in the Parliament House when it was being debated. It afforded me, incidentally, an illustration of the precarious condition of parliamentary institutions. There is a small but intransigent Communist Party. The day I was there they were banging their desks in unison in order to make debate impossible. I was not surprised that Parliament in Prague is still housed in a concert-hall. I can understand why it has not yet been thought worth while to give it a more permanent setting. But I was able to hear the answer to the Slovak propaganda. Briefly, it was this. Their liberty of speech had been grossly abused. As for the number of Czech officials, the Slovaks were not sufficiently educated to hold the leading posts. This the Government was doing its best to remedy. Money was being poured into Slovakia to found new schools. As for the Slovak industries that had died, the cause was the slump and the heavy cost of freights. In any case, the Slovaks—or so it was argued—were infinitely better off now than they had been under the empire. In the Hungarian Parliament they had only three seats. Now they were represented according to their strength, and they had women's suffrage.

There was one argument that had a homely ring about it. According to the Government speaker, the Slovak

Opposition only represented forty-four per cent of the Slovak population. The rest were happily distributed amongst the parties that supported the Government. It is the stock-in-trade of every Government speaker in England that the National Liberals, as opposed to the Independent Liberals, are in a majority in the House of Commons, quite oblivious of the fact that they have been repudiated by the Liberal Party organisation and to a man had escaped a Conservative candidate at the election. Methods of political propaganda do not vary much with frontiers.

Then the Slovaks did not and could not pay their share of taxation. The fact is, of course, that Slovakia is a poor country. It is a country mainly of forests and mountains. Before the war the peasants would go over into Hungary to help with the harvest, and then spend the winter making primitive toys. Now passport restrictions make Hungary impossible, and mechanical inventions have deprived them of a market for toys. Naturally they are a ready prey to Hungarian propaganda financed by revisionist societies. Those who advocate Slovak independence because they have swallowed whole Slovak propaganda should remember that it cannot be accomplished without a war. The Czechs are intensely Chauvinist as far as minorities are concerned.

I remember broaching the thorny subject of treaty revision with Dr. Beneš. Dr. Beneš said : " It might have been possible a year or two after the war. It is not possible now. The methods of Hungary's propaganda have been responsible. They have so stirred up trouble, not merely outside Czechoslovakia, but inside it. The whole country is now entirely uncompromising on the subject. No, we can only look to economic treaties in the end to heal the wounds."

But I fancy that the attitude of the Germans within their borders may in time incline the Czechs to a greater measure of toleration to the Slovaks. There are three million of them. Admittedly they are not as pan-German as the Austrians. Two parties in German-speaking Czechoslovakia—the Social Democrats and the Farmers' Party—are in the Coalition Government. Many of the industrialists among them are

fearful lest, in association with the Reich, their own highly organised industries would be suppressed, just as the old Hungarian industries have been suppressed by the Czechs.

But the Nazi Party, until it was forcibly disbanded, was a dangerous body. It is the old story. It drew its recruits from the bourgeois unemployed. Many of them have now fled the country, and have been formed into a kind of Czech Legion—but more probably because Germany doesn't know what to do with them than with any immediate designs on the independence of Czechoslovakia. Germany is too busy, for the moment, elsewhere. Still, the Germans within the Czech army present a dangerous problem. Their allegiance is suspect. It is commonly said that most of them are doubtfully loyal and the rest of them certainly disloyal. In any attack on Germany, Germans who represent a third of the army would just walk off home. So much for the ring of steel round Germany. Then there is always the possibility of a return of a Hapsburg to Vienna. There are many who sigh for the old glories of the empire who would be sorely tempted to enrol under the old eagles. In such an event, Czechoslovakia would persuade the Little Entente to take immediate hostile action. It would be as much as their existence was worth to tolerate a new occupant at Schönbrunn. It would mean, in each of their States, the beginning of powerful movements for the complete restoration for the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Altogether, Czechoslovakia, after seventeen years' existence, is in a rickety condition. I was not surprised to hear that, though in every other department of State the Government was making big reductions, they were increasing their expenditure on the army.



## CHAPTER LXV

### TWO REMARKABLE MEN

**T**HERE ARE two bulwarks in the stability of institutions in Czechoslovakia. They are, unfortunately, both impermanent, for they are personal. They are President Masaryk and Dr. Beneš. President Masaryk is, in more than a journalistic sense, the father of his country.

Up to 1914, Prague was a provincial capital in the confines of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was, like Bosnia, or any of the other remote provinces of the empire, ruled by a Viceroy appointed by Vienna, and, like the Bosnians, the Czechs were looked upon as an inferior race. Czech was not spoken in polite circles in Prague. It was regarded as the servants' language. In the last twenty years of his reign the Emperor only once visited Prague, and that was in 1910. Czechs love to hear now of the plight of Vienna. They recall how Vienna treated them. "The mills of God," they quote, "grind slowly . . ."

In their long years of subjection, an unknown professor was dreaming dreams of which there did not seem the slenderest chance of fulfilment. Indeed, Masaryk was not a nationalist before the war. He believed rather in improving the educational and cultural position of the Czechs, so that they could demand a measure of Home Rule as by right. A university professor, he hated war and violence of any kind. Then war came, and he went on a tour of the Allied States—Italy, France, England, and U.S.A.—there to plead the cause of Czech independence. Then, much against his will, he decided that he must meet violence with violence. So he went to Russia, to organise the Czech Legion. Whole regiments deserted from the Austrian lines—one with bands and colours flying. German officers were powerless to control them. For one reason they did not know their language.

It is significant, however, of the strength of the conviction

in the war that the Central Powers would prevail that the desertions did not amount to more than 100,000; the remaining 400,000 remained with the Austro-German forces. Indeed I found it rather embarrassing to talk to the Czechs about the war. I never knew on which side they fought. I experienced similar embarrassment when talking to Poles.

Masaryk and his 100,000, though they did not play the decisive part in independence that Garibaldi achieved with his thousand, had even more extraordinary adventures. They were mobilised and trained behind the Russian front, and when the Russian Empire collapsed they were driven into Siberia. There they formed one of the most formidable of the counter-revolutionary armies until finally they hacked their way back to play their part in the Czechoslovakia that had emerged out of the Peace Treaty. It is not surprising that the Siberian adventure is accorded now the splendour of a national legend. A couple of bears, now old and mangy, that survive in the public park from the exploits in Siberia, are revered like the geese that saved Rome. Their cage is a favourite Sunday pilgrimage. When the bodies of Czechs who died in Siberia were brought home, they were given a reception equal only to that accorded to the coffin of Napoleon when it was landed from St. Helena. All the commanders in the Army of any importance are old legionaries.

The chief hero of it all is now eighty-three, but he is still in possession of his faculties. The old warrior has indeed become the professor again. He is writing an account of Russia before the war, in its political, philosophical, and cultural aspects. Under the constitution he has only nominal powers, except that he can refuse assent to a Bill twice before, if sent up to him a third time, it becomes law. But he is an immense unifying influence. He has simple tastes, he goes everywhere, is easily accessible, and, what is most important of all, he spends three months of the year in Czechoslovakia. Masaryk is one of the few successful instances, perhaps the only one in history, of the professor turned man of action.

If Masaryk is father of his country, Dr. Beneš is their first

great son. I was immensely impressed with him—shrewd, competent, energetic, and with a real vision of post-war Europe. It is something, indeed, to have survived for fifteen years the intrigues and jealousies of all the little politicians that a new country inevitably throws up. He has done that, and at the same time made his country count in the Councils of the Nations.

I enjoyed an hour's conversation with him, ranging over every aspect of Central European policy, and I thought that he talked more sense than any foreign statesman I met during my trip. He summed up what he called "MY dream." It was an economic union stretching from Prague to Athens. It cannot be realised yet. What they had achieved so far was an economic Little Entente. He looked forward in a few years to Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia being a self-supporting unit. As such it would take the place of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

As I walked away from the Foreign Office on the citadel I looked up at the notices over the street. They were written in Czech, and there were the scars on the walls still remaining, where the notices in German had been torn down. Were they gaping wounds which one day would be avenged? I remembered something of the sort in Bratislava. There the notices had been in Hungarian as well as Czech, but the Hungarian population had fallen below twenty per cent, and so, in accordance with the agreement, the Hungarian notices had been taken down. It is incidents like this that make Central Europe a boiling cauldron. It may have boiled over long before Beneš has damped the fires. If it does, there will not be much that will survive the work of President Masaryk and Dr. Beneš.

## CHAPTER LXVI

### I RETURN HOME

IT WAS NOW the eve of the autumn session, and high time that I ceased to be a journalist and became a politician again. So, resisting the temptation of "stopping off" in Munich and involving myself in "the case of Mr. Panter," which was then ripening to a crisis, I set off for home.

What impressed me most on my return to London after weeks of wandering in Central and South-Eastern Europe was the extraordinary isolation of England. Compared to the other countries that I had visited, England seemed to be in another continent, almost another hemisphere.

Here men and women were talking of peace as if it were the natural order of society. I had heard it nowhere else. I had been in the Polish Corridor when the Danzig elections had taken place. Though it is a free city, watched over by the League of Nations, it is really controlled by the Poles. "What would happen," I asked a leading Pole, "if the Nazi Government openly transgressed the Treaty?" "The Polish Army would march into the town," was the immediate answer. I could see that it was no idle threat. There was the Polish arsenal on the banks of the Vistula, in the precincts of the city itself.

I came back into Germany. Pacifism was literally a crime. I met young men who had been beaten up by the Nazis for no other reasons than that they had been supporters of the League of Nations. I passed on to Vienna. There was nothing but talk of war.

I passed through Hungary. The return of her lost territories is the only issue in Hungarian politics. The National slogan is "*Nem, Nem, Soha*" ("No, No, Never"). In no circumstance will they agree with the existing boundaries. To do them justice, they are exhausting all peaceful means to bring it about. But if they fail . . . well, there is always re-armament and a German alliance.

I went on into Rumania. Rumania, I was assured, wished to live at peace with her neighbours. "But what about the 800,000 Hungarians in Transylvania?" I asked. "Was any revision of the Treaty possible which could give them the Government they desired?" Their faces changed. It was one of the questions a foreigner was not expected to ask.

I came back through Prague. I asked about the possibilities of "an arrangement" of the frontiers with Hungary. "Revision means war," they had said. Everywhere there was a reckless readiness to gamble in human lives.

I made my way home through Belgium, and awoke to find myself in Louvain. What memories that conjured up! There was the voice of Mr. Asquith at the Guildhall meeting in September 1914. With what passionate indignation he had spoken of the burning of the Louvain library—"that holocaust of irreparable treasures lit up by blind barbarian vengeance." I could see, out of my window, great building activity on the steep slopes in front of the town. Were the Belgians already rebuilding the forts that it was thought, with the Versailles Treaty, could be left dismantled for ever?

I was standing on the quay at Dover, in the early stages of recovery from a terrible bout of sea-sickness on the Ostend to Dover crossing, when I was brought up against the bewildering contrast between England and the rest of Europe. A placard of an evening paper announced the East Fulham Election result. Still rather numb and dazed, I read, as my baggage was being examined, that a re-armament candidate, who started the campaign with a fourteen-thousand majority, had lost a Gibraltar of Toryism by 4,500 votes. So much for the war fever in Great Britain. The contrast was heightened when I spoke at a League of Nations Union meeting at Wolverhampton two days after my return. It was in a chapel. There was not a uniform there. It was packed with young men and girls, and the very mention of the word peace was cheered again and again. The last political meeting I had attended had been in Vienna. It had been organised by the Heimwehr, and was just a military parade.

The platform echoed, not to the sonorous periods of the chairman, but to the grounding of rifles.

It was strange, too, on Sunday, once more to hear prayers for "the High Court of Parliament." In most countries I visited, it does not exist, and where it does maintain some kind of entity, as in Buda Pesth and Bucharest, it is anything but a "High Court." The Parliament House in Belgrade provides the most arresting picture of the collapse of democracy. There it stands—only three-quarters completed. The work has long since been abandoned, and the steps are choked with nettles.

And here was the great State Opening of Parliament : the waiting crowds, the gold coach, the glittering scene in the House of Lords—all expressing the might and majesty of popular government. Could anything be more impressive than the reading of the King's Speech ? As the King stood in front of the throne, Big Ben chimed twelve o'clock, and, on the last stroke, he began to read, in that clear, deep, resonant voice of his, the statement prepared by his Ministers. It foreshadowed a busy session ; acres of Hansard would be consumed in Ministerial explanations and opposition attacks, weary nights would be spent in exhaustive examination of every sub-clause of the estimates that in the old-time phrase "would be presented to us for the public services." What an extraordinary contrast to the government by decree, and taxation by ukase, that I had been witnessing ! Even the outburst of Mr. McGovern only heightened the comparison. "Why don't you restore the cuts, you parasites ?" he had shouted. In Germany, in an hour he would have been in a concentration camp. According to Mr. McGovern, all that happened was that the Prime Minister subsequently assured him that the King had not minded the interruption in the least ; that he was in favour of the restoration of the cuts, and had in fact said, "My God, Mr. MacDonald, can't you restore the cuts ?"

It was strange to return to a country where one could speak one's mind freely about one's rulers. I had the occasion in a restaurant, in conversation with a fellow politician, to say something rude about a Cabinet Minister. I found

myself sinking my voice to a ridiculous whisper, and looking furtively round to see whether anyone was listening. It was the result of six weeks' sojourn under dictatorships.

Then there is the wealth of England that is so impressive. There is a solidity about London that is quite absent from foreign capitals. One sees it in Regent Street—sometimes choked from end to end with vehicles. In Berlin there are almost no traffic blocks, and in Vienna, once the most fashionable city in Europe, if one sees a luxury car at all, the chances are fifty-fifty that it belongs to a diplomat. There is terrible distress, even under-nourishment, in the English Industrial North, but there is no starvation. In Berlin I had seen men on the verge of collapse from starvation, and in Vienna there was more begging even than in the cities of India. They go to bed at sundown in the working-class districts, because it is cold, and they have no coal and are hungry.

But it is the passionate yearning of Parliament for peace that remains the most impressive characteristic of all. Here are 470 members out of 615, elected, it is true, to support the National Government, but nominated in the first place by Conservative associations with all that implies in the ultimate control by rubicund colonels and belligerent spinsters. They might be expected to reflect the belief in discipline and armaments and suppression of liberty that has swept through Europe like the crusading waves of the Middle Ages.

But listen to a debate on foreign policy in the House of Commons. There is Robert Boothby—young, eloquent, ambitious, with streaks of idealism in his make up, the type that in other countries is a budding Nazi leader. "The collective organisation of peace," he says, "at the present time could only be carried out by the League of Nations. The Government should not be deterred from pursuing a resolute foreign policy based on the League of Nations, and on the Pact of Paris, with sanctions to enforce it." There is General Spears, once the liaison officer between the French and the British in the first German drive to Paris. A lead for peace is what he pleads for. "It was still possible for this country to give a lead. If we gave a lead for which the nations

hoped, we could prevent a catastrophe. We could save the League, and we could prevent the danger of war. But when were we going to get that lead ? ” So it went on all through the debate. Not a voice was raised in support of isolation and re-armament.

That was the debate on the Christmas adjournment on December 21st, 1933. It is true that a plea for re-armament came six weeks later, when the House reassembled in the New Year, and, of course, from the mouth of Mr. Churchill. It was a warning against our aerial unpreparedness, and, judged fairly by the cold, cruel logic of history, and the pre-war mentality, it could be justified. “ We may, within a measurable distance of time,” he said ; and his lisp and hesitating manner were more pronounced, as they always are when he feels something very deeply, “ in the life-time of those who are here, if we are not in a proper state of security, be confronted on some occasion with a visit of an Ambassador, and may have to give an answer in a few hours ; and, if that answer is not satisfactory, within the next few hours the crash of bombs exploding in London, and the cataracts of masonry and fire and smoke will warn us of any inadequacy which has been permitted in our aerial defences.”

But, though there was strained attention, there were none of the full-throated cheers that would have greeted such a speech in any other country of Europe. Mr. Baldwin followed. It has been rather cruelly said of him that he is always at his best when he is persuading the House of Commons to do nothing. If a Liberal may presume to come to his defence, I would answer that usually he has been proved right. On this occasion he had no difficulty in securing the withdrawal of the motion for aerial re-armament.

My mind went back to the boiling cauldron of Europe, and as the House passed on to the next item on the agenda—an invitation “ to view with grave concern the serious increase in the number of road accidents during the past year ”—I felt oddly reassured.









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